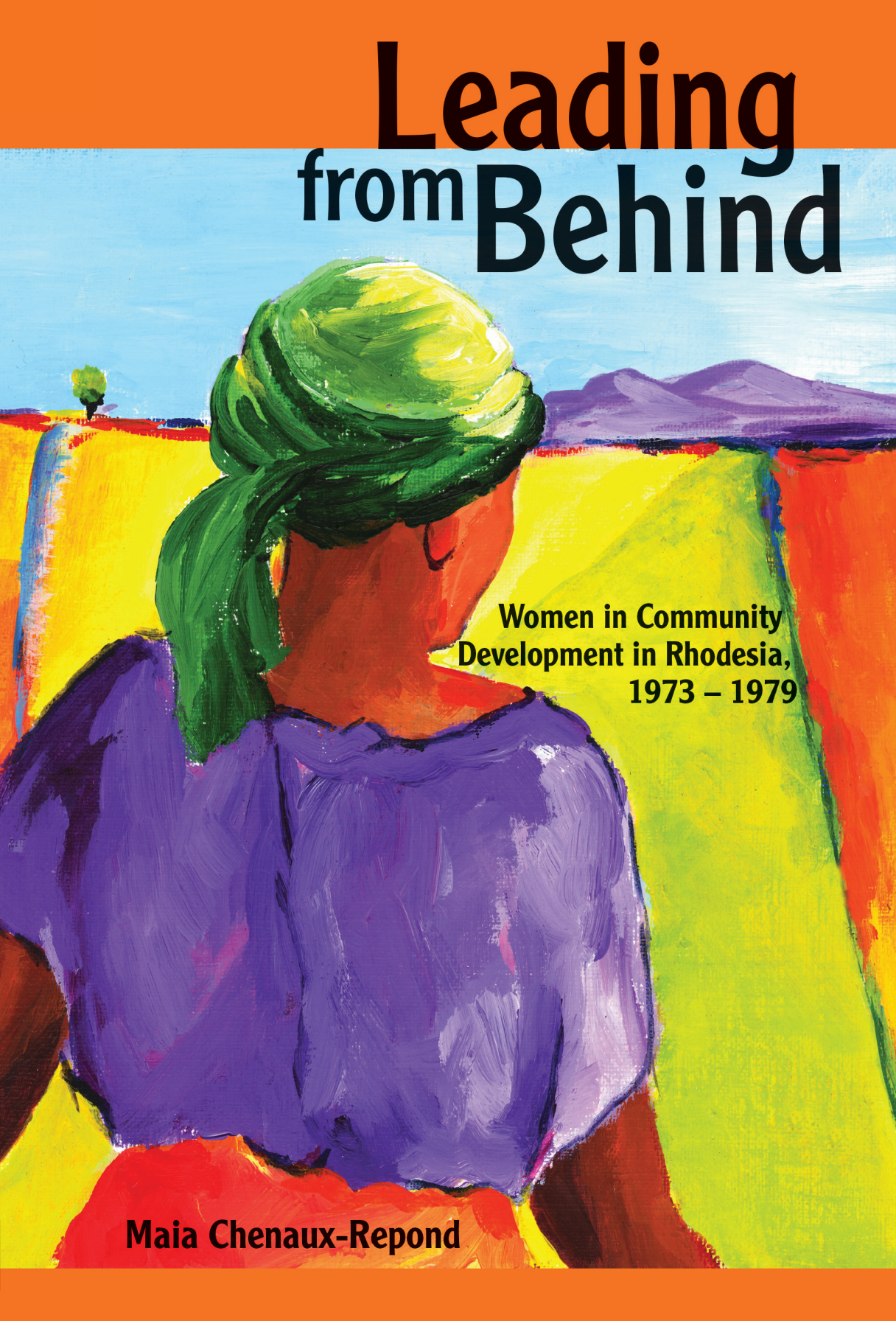


Leading from Behind



**Women in Community
Development in Rhodesia,
1973 – 1979**

Maia Chenux-Repond

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Caliente.COM

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in Rhodesia, 1973–1979

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Maia Chenaux-Repond



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*To my family
Rolf, Sue, Caroline and Yvonne*

*and to
all Women Advisers who worked in the Province of Mashonaland South
and the Development Workers who worked in the
Protected Villages and Consolidated Villages in Mashonaland East
during the 1970s*

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Preface

Some years ago, my daughters asked me to write about my work in community development. That became my first attempt at what is now this book. It was not easy. My emotional memory recalls the joy of the early days of my work in the rural areas, the intense pain of the war years – and the difficulty of relating to family and friends during those years; but I found that I could not remember all the facts. Yes, I should have written them down during the 1980s, when my memories were still fresh. But then I had other plans.

During the later years of my work, pain corroded the joy. I remember the nightmares, the insomnia, and the unspeakable fatigue. I took sleeping pills and, eventually, once I had left the ministry, I learned to sleep again without them. But in the process, I successfully repressed the war memories that had triggered those long, white nights.

This account is based on reports to my superiors that fell ‘off the back of a truck’. They lingered in cardboard boxes for thirty years without my ever looking at them. My set of the various reports is by no means complete, so not all detail was available to me. In any case, they summations were dry and concise, as befits internal reports in a government department. They contain no rendering of the emotions involved, they give no flavour, they leave out the joy, and the weight of what I regarded as the most important aspect of my role – supporting the Women Advisers and Development Workers, both professionally and emotionally, as they continued with their work under the increasing pressures of a civil war.

I have also drawn on annual reports of my field staff, and on their personal letters to me, though some written during the war years were so personal that they asked me to destroy them after I had read them. I invariably burned them. Lastly, I have drawn on the memories that those mentioned in the Acknowledgements have shared with me.

There are no records whatsoever in the National Archives of Zimbabwe about the Community Development Section (Women) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, even though it was active in all the provinces. I could only write about the province I worked in. I intend to donate my own records to the Archives so that other researchers may have access to them.

*Maia Chenaux-Repond
June 2017*

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my appreciation to:

My family – my husband Rolf, who gave me his support during these eventful times, sometimes ‘against his better judgement’ and who ‘only ever saw my back hunched over a laptop during the last five years’; our daughter Sue, who first asked, ‘Mum, what did you actually *do* when we were growing up?’, and thus prompted me to start the narrative; and our daughters Caroline and Yvonne, who unfailingly encouraged me in my writing.

Paddy Pacey, whose early constructive comments helped to shape the text.

Chris Hales, who persuaded the History Society of Zimbabwe to invite me to give a talk on this topic.

Professor emeritus Ray Roberts, who offered to read an early draft and encouraged me to publish.

My brother, Jörg Furrer-Brunner, and my sister-in-law, Rosemarie Furrer-Schiess, who gave me generous financial assistance for this project.

Lazarus Takawira, who, after reading my *Women of Courage – Eight Life Stories*, so open-heartedly donated one of his early sculptures to help finance the publication of this book.

The Embassy of Switzerland, for financial assistance that will make it possible to place copies of the book in Zimbabwean libraries; and Ambassador Ruth Huber for her personal interest.

Nick Baalbergen, who shared much information with me and dispelled my confusion as regards the paramilitary structures of Internal Affairs.

Dudley Wall, for allowing me to use some photographs that had first appeared on his website, <<http://www.freewebs.com/dudleywall>>.

Paul Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin for permission to reproduce from their book *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia, 1965–1980* their map of infiltration routes that appears on pages 156/7.

Kevin Philip of Parascopes, who constructed the map of Mashonaland South that appears on page xvii, compiled from a variety of sources.

Professor emeritus Michael Bourdillon, for taking the trouble to read an early draft and to write the foreword.

Roger Stringer, who edited my manuscript with expertise and empathy, designed and laid out the book, and compiled the index.

My publisher, Irene Staunton, who gave helpful advice from the very beginning.

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District Commissioners Charles Collett, John Saunders and Brian Lucas, who supported my work during very difficult times, Assistant District Commissioner Andy Parkinson, who always had an encouraging word for Development Workers and Women Advisers, and District Officer Debra Enslin, whose support I much appreciated in the field and office, and some of whose texts I have incorporated in this book.

Foreword

The publication of this book is a fitting and welcome tribute to the women we meet in it. Maia Chenaux-Repond tells us of her encounters with women in Mashonaland South province for six years just prior to the independence of Zimbabwe. She describes her entry into development work, and her initiatives over the years to find ways to improve the lives of women, and to boost their morale in times of extreme hardship.

At the same time, she provides many insights into the operation of the white government in rural administration, and of life in racially divided Rhodesia. Maia explicitly states her own values that lay behind her work; but she describes how events unfolded, allowing readers to make their own judgements about policies and programmes.

This is an account of how theoretical ideas such as community development and the advancement of women can work out on the ground, with committed workers and inspiring and committed leadership. Aims had constantly to be adapted to particular local situations, and especially to disruptions due to the war. The book describes those things that went well and those that did not go according to plan. The author's own records and memories are supported by reminiscences recorded many years later of some of the women she had worked with, and of some of the children who fled the country during the war.

We meet many and varied women. We learn something of the difficulties they faced in a patriarchal rural society governed by white supremacists. We see how many of the women overcame difficulties. Extracts from their comments and reports bring vividly to life their hopes and frustrations, and the help they received from the author's many initiatives.

The style of memoir or diary helps to break down stereotypes. Apart from the women appearing in the book, we meet caring and enterprising men as well as patriarchal autocrats. Among the white government employees and administrators we also find variety, ranging from those who had deep knowledge of, and respect for, the culture of the people they were serving, to those who had only ignorant prejudice; from those who were deeply sympathetic to the roles of women in their communities, to those who were chauvinists. The account often illustrates the difficulties faced by those who genuinely cared for the people they were administering in a situation fraught with racial tensions.

The narrative relating to the years of more intense warfare shows courageous women continuing in their development work through troubles and dangers, suffering the same upheavals that the people around them were facing, and remaining committed to their work. Maia describes her continued support for the women she had trained, involving repeated visits to war zones. The focus remains on the women's work; but the war impinges heavily on this work. The vignettes show suffering and trauma, courage and perseverance, and attempts to continue life and work amid war. They show both brutality and humanity from combatants on both sides. They also show developments taking place in spite of all the difficulties, and attempts to provide relief.

There are lessons and inspiration for all in these pages.

*Michael Bourdillon
Professor Emeritus
Department of Sociology
University of Zimbabwe*

Abbreviations used

ADC	Assistant District Commissioner
ADF	African Development Fund
ALOR	Adult Literacy Organization of Rhodesia
APA	African Purchase Area
ARU	Administration Reinforcement Units
BCDT	Branch of Community Development Training
CD	Community Development
CDOW	Community Development Officer (Women)
CIO	Central Intelligence Organization (used in a general sense for a government informer)
CV	Consolidated Village
CWC	Catholic Women's Clubs
DA	District Assistant
DC	District Commissioner
DEVAG	Department of Agricultural Development
DSA	District Security Assistant
FAWC	Federation of African Women's Clubs
FPA	Family Planning Association
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique)
HED	Home Economics Demonstrator
JOC	Joint Operations Command
PAR	Playgroup Association of Rhodesia
PC	Provincial Commissioner
PCDOW	Provincial Community Development Officer (Women)
PSB	Public Services Board
PV	Protected Village
SCDOW	Senior Community Development Officer (Women)
TILCOR	Tribal Trust Land Development Corporation
TTL	Tribal Trust Land
WGL	Women's Group Liaison
YFC	Young Farmers' Club / Youth For Conservation
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union

Map of Mashonaland South

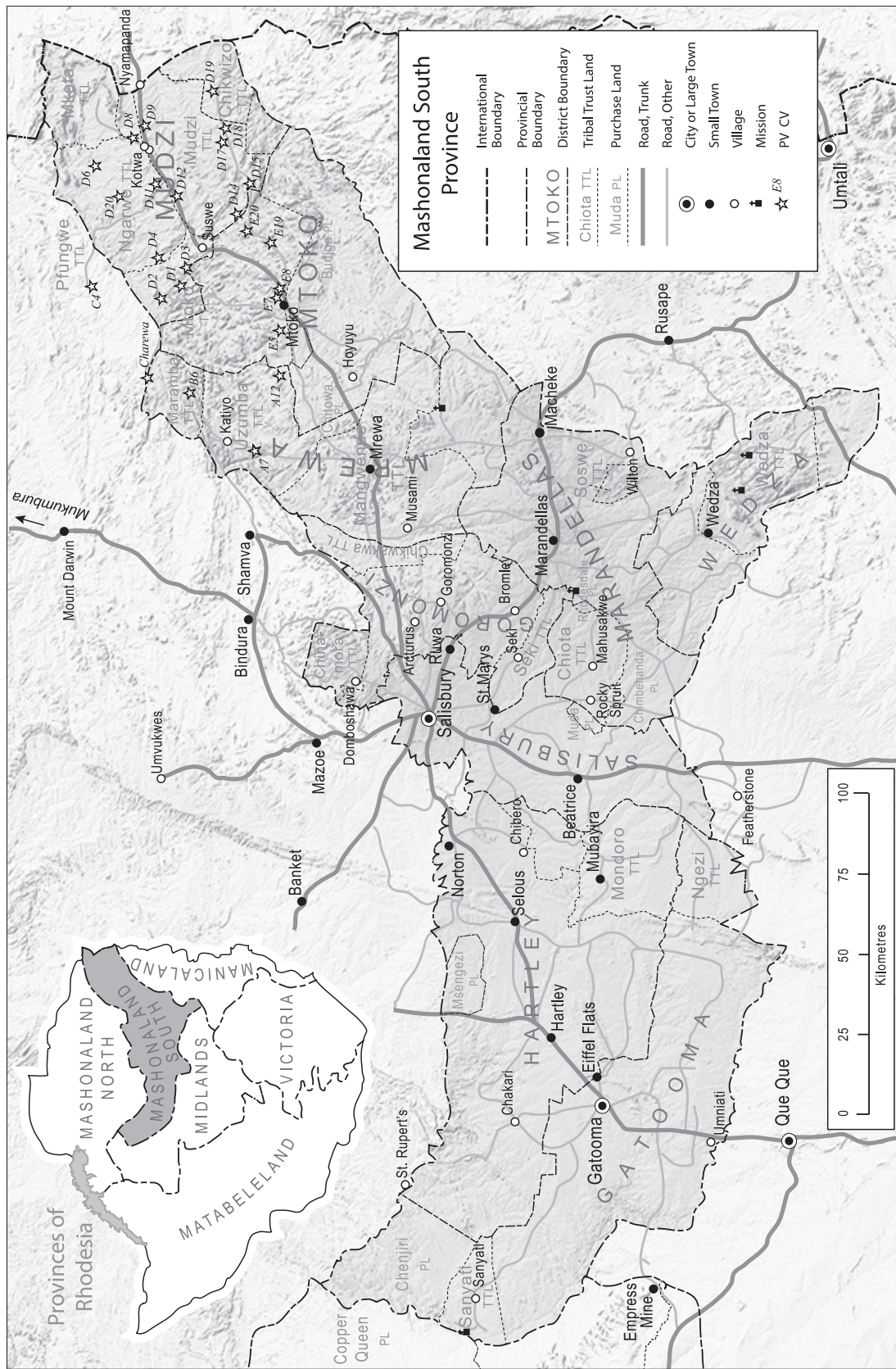
This map shows the province of Mashonaland South in 1972, before the boundary changes resulting from the creation of a third Mashonaland province, Mashonaland East, a couple of years later.

The approximate location of the Consolidated and Protected Villages mentioned in this book have been incorporated into the map, even though they were created at various times during the decade, and some were outside the original boundaries of Mashonaland South although within the new Mashonaland East. Some were referred to by more than one name.

The names of many places were changed after Zimbabwe's independence. Throughout this book those names applicable during the 1970s are used.

Key to names of Consolidated/Protected Villages

Mrewa District	A7	Mashambanaka
	A12	Nyamara
	B6	Mutawatawa
	C4	Nyakasoro
Mudzi District	D1	Chingaruru
	D2	Benson Mine / Chiunye
	D3	Nyamakoho
	D4	Shinga
	D6	Kondo / Msau
	D8	Dendera
	D9	Marembé
	D11	Masarakufa
	D12	Stephen Dam
	D14	Nyakuchena / Katsande
	D15	Makaha
	D17	Nyamande
Mtoko District	D18	Chikwizo
	D19	Gozi
	E5	Katsakunye
	E7	Mutsvaira
	E8	Chitekwe
	E19	Chimoyo
	E20	Makosa





Maia Chenaux-Repond
Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) Mashonaland South, 1975



Prologue: 1972





Towards the end of 1972, this advertisement appeared in the Rhodesian press:

RHODESIA PUBLIC SERVICE

MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
OFFICERS
(WOMEN)**

Applications are invited for the above posts which will be situated in one of the main centres other than Salisbury and Bulawayo.

Salary Scale: \$2892 to \$4260 per annum.

Qualifications: Applicants should have a degree or diploma in social science or community development or its equivalent. Practical experience in the field of African welfare or women's clubs would be an advantage.

Duties: To encourage the participation of African women in the development of communities and in civic affairs. This will involve working in close co-operation with voluntary organisations, women's clubs and specialist government departments, integrating work with women's organisations into the existing policy of community development and undertaking the supervision of field workers and the training of local leaders. These duties will involve extensive travel in rural areas.

Applications giving the following details should be addressed to the Secretary for Internal Affairs, Private Bag 7702, Causeway so as to reach him not later than the 30th November, 1972.

1. Full names
2. Marital status
3. Education qualifications
4. Previous experience
5. Preference, if any, for appointment to a particular centre.

61090-Y-19

It seemed to describe my dream job. Ever since I had come to Southern Rhodesia I had wanted to gain insights into how its African society functioned, its values, mores and traditions and – where I could and where I was wanted – to make a contribution towards the improvement of the lives of the less-privileged members of the country. I wanted to transcend

the separateness between the African and the European.¹ Here was a job that would give me that opportunity.

For the past year and a half I had been working, mornings only, at the University of Rhodesia as a Research Assistant in the Institute for Social Research, assisting my much-loved boss, Joan May, with studies that had resulted in the publication of *Drinking Patterns in Rhodesia: Highfield African Township* and *Drinking in a Rhodesian African Township*.² I asked Joan May and Gordon Chavunduka, then a lecturer in sociology,³ both of whom I highly respected, to tell me what they thought.

This was Joan May's response:

I would say this would be the ideal job for you – if it was not situated within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. You simply do not fit within that ministry. It's an all-male, hierarchical set up, staffed with autocratic, reactionary, chauvinistic 'machos'. You'll hate them and they won't accept you.

Then she added, 'Being you, you'd manage at the beginning, but in the end there will be an acrimonious divorce.'

Gordon Chavunduka, however, thought differently:

I thoroughly subscribe to the philosophy of community development. You seem to be the ideal person to implement it with women. I have noticed how you related to township women during the research process and to our enumerators. The rural women will respond to you. If I did not have the job here, which I love, I would myself have no hesitation working in the community development field.

I decided to follow my dream.



I had had only the vaguest idea about Africa before I emigrated from Switzerland to Southern Rhodesia in 1957 to marry the man I loved; he had emigrated the year before. Indeed, I had never heard of the country when he announced his intention to move there. I had to look it up in an atlas.

¹ I will use terms such as 'African' and 'European' where necessary here as those terms were used officially to identify different racial groups and to define their rights; to use different terms would only cause confusion.

² D.H. Reader and Joan May, *Drinking Patterns in Rhodesia: Highfield African Township*, Salisbury (Salisbury: Institute for Social Research, University of Rhodesia, 1971); Joan May, *Drinking in a Rhodesian African Township* (Salisbury: University of Rhodesia, 1973).

³ Gordon Chavunduka later became Professor of Sociology and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe. He founded the Zimbabwe National Traditional Healers Association (ZINATHA), of which he was chairman until his death in January 2013.

During the 1950s people did not travel as they do now. I had never met anyone who lived in Africa. I had read *Livingstone's Travels* and Albert Schweitzer's books about his work in Lambaréné. I was eager to immerse myself in African life and culture. Instead, I found myself in white suburbia, in a racially segregated town, with little contact with the indigenous people. I was perplexed and repulsed by 'the way things were' and felt somehow cheated. This job would give me the opportunity to meet African people in a meaningful way – at last.

My husband, Rolf, was in two minds about what I wanted to embark on. He still wished that I could feel fulfilled as a full-time wife and mother – the role that nature had intended for women. On the other hand, he did not want to stand in the way of my 'fulfilling my potential', as I put it. A mornings-only job at the university nearby was one thing; a full-time job that entailed a great deal of travelling and many overnight stays was quite another. He compromised by insisting that adequate arrangements be made for the care of our daughters.

Our two older daughters, Sue, aged fourteen, and Caroline, eleven, assured me that they were quite old enough to look after themselves for the few hours a day when I, or both of us, would be away and they were not at school. They volunteered a bit later that they were looking forward to more freedom. I sensed, however, that our youngest, Yvonne, aged five-and-a-half, could still have done with more mothering, needing the reassurance that I would always be at home when she returned from school.

The interview in musty Old Shell House went well, despite a rotund man in the corridor trying to discourage me.

'Are you here to apply for that job with women?' he asked. When I replied that I was, he said, 'If you have any -ology in your degree, forget it! We don't need any "women of good will" around here, befuddled by the illusion that all men are equal!'

'I will be working with women,' I said as calmly as I could. 'And all women *are* of equal value.'

'You can say that again,' he retorted. 'Of equally dubious value!' And he moved on.

It was obvious during the interview that I knew little about the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Furthermore, I had had no experience with women's clubs. Nevertheless, the chief interviewers, Winifred Wilson and Robert Woollacott, appeared to be satisfied with what I told them about my interactions with the enumerators of the research project I was involved in at the university and my experience with the Adult Literacy Organization.

When I attended the interview, I had already booked a trip to Switzerland

with two of our daughters, Caroline and Yvonne (Sue did not want to come at the time). I had bought the tickets for the girls with the proceeds of a bond that I had inherited from my grandmother, and my father had sent me my ticket. I explained this during the interview – and also that I had not been back to see my family for twelve years.

My interviewers were sympathetic, and when they told me that I had the job, they also granted me ‘leave’. They explained, however, that Public Service regulations did not permit officers to take leave during their first year of service. Therefore, although they would appoint me, I would have to resign in order to take the ‘leave’, giving the obligatory one month’s notice during my probationary period. While I was on leave, I could re-apply for the post – which they would keep open for me! And this is exactly what we did.



In Switzerland I told everybody enthusiastically about my new job. Several friends and family members asked whether I thought it was wise to take on a job in the rural areas at a time when negotiations between the Smith regime and Britain – as well as the negotiations, such as they were, between the Rhodesian Front government and the nationalists – had failed, and the nationalists had decided that only armed conflict would bring them equal rights.

While I completely agreed with the need to remove discrimination, I was quite blasé about the armed conflict – convinced (was I?), like most white Rhodesians, that ‘it will be over in no time’ owing to the Rhodesian army’s military prowess, and trusting, like fewer of them, that sanity would prevail and negotiations would resume and succeed.

I also had to point out that the nationalists did not just want equal rights – the removal of racial discrimination in everyday life, as my friends saw it – but full political power, to be achieved by ‘one man, one vote’. I also said that one could have legitimate doubts about the wisdom of giving the vote to illiterate people.

Max Zaugg, our friend from school days, listened to me enthusing about how our community development work would lead to a better quality of life for the rural women and their families and then said ruefully, ‘You obviously believe in progress.’

‘Don’t you?’

‘No, I don’t.’

I must admit, I did. I saw better health, better education, better crop yields, higher incomes, better infrastructure and, importantly, self-

actualization by individual women and women's groups as progress. I felt that his comment about progress was 'rich', coming from a Swiss, who was 'having it so good'. Today, I am painfully aware of some of the dubious side-effects of 'progress'.

My mother, Else Furrer-Grämiger, was enthusiastic from the beginning about the work I was planning to do. Her support meant a lot to me. However, she was also somewhat uneasy about how I would cope with what she saw to be a demanding job without my husband, whom she thought highly of, and with my children feeling neglected. We talked about her father and his dedication to the medical care of the poor in the rural community of Werdenberg, where he was the proverbial country doctor – lobbying for better medical services and safer conditions in the silver mine and factories, and writing scientific papers in addition to his humanitarian work.

I sensed that she felt that I was following in her beloved father's footsteps. I added that I was deeply influenced by the work I had seen her do with adult deaf people when I was a child and, when I was a teenager, with intellectually below-average children and with some of their parents; many of them had barely made it through primary school themselves and had personal or economic problems. Marginalized people were always welcome in our home.

We talked about the children from bombed-out cities that she had cared for during World War II, about the care parcels she had sent via the Red Cross, about the Jewish refugees who had passed through our home – her own social conscience in action. She had always told us children, 'In the sight of God, all human beings are of equal value.'

My father, Walter Furrer, although partly proud of me, could not help warning me about the dangers of neglecting my husband and children. He was not in favour of wives and mothers working outside the home. (I didn't remind him that he had forced his own wife to do just that by divorcing her.) Politically, he had engaged himself first with the Protestant Synod of Switzerland and then with the World Council of Churches and its support for nationalism in Africa. So he was very interested in the work I was going to do. Indeed, during a future visit it was he who would debrief me, and he listened most attentively to what I told him about what our Section was trying to achieve in the rural areas of Rhodesia.



Back in Rhodesia, it became apparent that I would need a car for my new job. No government vehicles were ever assigned to the Community

Development Section (Women).⁴ Rolf and I found a second-hand Renault 6 at Mabelreign Service Station – a 1972 model with a very low mileage. It cost \$1,732.50 – almost two-thirds of my anticipated annual pay – so I had to buy it on hire purchase over two years.⁵ I was to earn \$2,892 a year – considerably less, I was to discover much later, than a man employed at a similar level.

The down-payment alone, for which Rolf gave me a loan, was almost two months' salary! I had no trade references, having always paid cash for everything, and I remember the service station owner's quizzical glance when I told him why. However, he must have been satisfied with my look of honesty – and with my husband's owning a house worth \$30,000 with a mortgage bond of only \$12,000 on it – and, on 18 December, the deed was done.



I am writing this account of the work of the Community Development Section (Women) of the Rhodesian Ministry of Internal Affairs forty years after my involvement. Obviously the social context in which we worked was vastly different from that of today's Zimbabwe, so I must make an attempt to sketch it.

The vast majority of the people of Rhodesia were African, though the proportion of people of other races has somewhat changed, their minority status having become even more pronounced today. According to the 1969 population census, Rhodesia had a total population of just over five million (5,102,450), of whom 4,850,000 (95%) were classified as Africans, 228,300 as Europeans, 9,000 as Asians, and 15,150 as Coloureds (people of mixed race).⁶ The socio-economic characteristics of these groups had grown to become very different as the country developed after colonization in 1890.

Well over half the adult African population was illiterate. (It is estimated by literacy experts that children who have had five years' schooling or less will revert to illiteracy as adults.) Just under half of the African children aged 7–16 were enrolled in schools (49%), though only 42% of the girls. Of the African population aged 17 and above, nearly half had had no

⁴ Although this is the correct full name of the Section, I will often abbreviate it to 'Women's Section' in this book, and use PCDOW for the Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) job title.

⁵ All dollar sums given are Rhodesian dollars unless otherwise indicated. One Rhodesian dollar was worth between US\$1.40 and US\$1.70 during most of the 1970s.

⁶ All the following statistics are taken from the *Census of Population, 1969* (Salisbury: Central Statistical Office, 1969), unless otherwise stated (figures rounded).

schooling (47%), one third had completed Grade 5 (seven years of primary schooling) or higher (30%), 9% Standard 6 or higher, and only 2% had completed secondary education.⁷ Only about 12% of the children completing primary education could secure a place in a secondary school; most left formal education at the end of primary school. Furthermore, African children paid school fees. In contrast, education was compulsory and free for European, Asian and Coloured children.

It was not government ill will that kept the majority of African children out of school. Neither Southern Rhodesia, nor later Rhodesia, received any development aid. In 1976, the Secretary for African Education stated:

I have not at any time attempted to calculate the financial implications of compulsory education but I did ... estimate the probable cost of a four-year secondary course for all the children leaving primary school at present and this amounted to over 400 million dollars in additional capital investment and over 100 million dollars in additional recurrent expenditure.⁸

The annual budget for the whole country in 1976 was \$468,497,000.⁹

The first university, the University of Rhodesia, which was multiracial, had opened in 1956 (as the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland). Before that, many Africans who had wanted to pursue tertiary education went to Fort Hare in South Africa – where, ironically, they were politicized.

Wealth was unevenly distributed. The annual average income of Africans employed in the formal sector, mostly in urban areas, was \$297; that of European employees was \$2,971.¹⁰

African women bore far more children than those of other races. The ratio of European births per 1000 women per annum was 18; the ratio of African births was 52. The European population increased at a rate of 1.1% per year, the African population at 3.3%. As a result of this high birth rate, 60% of the African population were below the age of nineteen; half were younger than fifteen.

While the Europeans, Asians and Coloureds lived mainly in towns (79%, 91% and 83%, respectively), only 14% of the African population did so. The overwhelming majority of Africans continued to live according to their traditions, and mostly at subsistence level, in the Tribal Trust Lands

⁷ At the time, the African Education system provided for eight years of primary schooling, starting with 'Sub A', followed by 'Sub B', and then by 'Standard 1' to 'Standard 6'. In 1969 this system was changed to seven years of primary schooling: 'Grade 1' to 'Grade 7'.

⁸ Rhodesia. *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Racial Discrimination* [Chairman: Sir Vincent Quenet] (Salisbury: Government Printer, Cmd. R.R.6, 1976).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Rhodesia. *Monthly Digest of Statistics*, January 1970.

under the authority of their chiefs. As regards administration, the chiefs reported to the District Commissioner, but they were very influential in spiritual and customary-law matters, presiding over civil cases in the chiefs' courts.

Most of the country's fifty-two districts comprised both European areas – mostly commercial farming land, dotted with small towns – and African areas – Tribal Trust Lands (TTLs)¹¹ and African Purchase Areas (APAs).¹² The Ministry of Internal Affairs administered 'African Affairs'¹³ in these last two land categories, but had only limited administrative functions in European areas.



It is difficult, after nearly fifty years, to give a description of what Rhodesia felt like during the 1960s in terms of race relations. What struck me most when I first arrived in Salisbury, the capital city of Southern Rhodesia, was that people of different races never met on equal terms, only in an employer-employee relationship. This was a great disappointment to me. I had come to Southern Rhodesia as a nineteen-year-old, straight from school, full of the spirit of adventure, to marry the young man who had emigrated there a year before. I was eager to meet the African people, to immerse myself in their culture. Instead, I found myself isolated in white suburbia.

As a young housewife and mother in a cottage in the suburb of Greendale, the only Africans I ever met were the vegetable vendor, who visited once a week on his bicycle, and the domestic worker of the people in the main house. I also had to become fluent in English first, even to make white friends. In the beginning I asked them how I could meet African people. I was usually told that if I tried I would soon change my mind about wanting to. 'We are too different,' my white friends said. By 1961 I had rebelled and consciously sought contact with Africans by doing voluntary work – first by doing handicrafts with the children of

¹¹ The land in Tribal Trust Lands was held in trust by the state, in practice by the chief, who allocated land to his followers, mainly to the male heads of household, but also at times to widows and even divorcées, or to a group for a community project. There were no title deeds, but the boundaries of a family head's lands were well known and the land-use rights were nevertheless usually passed on through inheritance.

¹² The land in African Purchase Areas was held under individual title. Africans who had successfully completed the four-year theoretical and practical agricultural training that led to the Master Farmer's Certificate could buy a farm there. They thus became part of the 'small-scale commercial farming sector'.

¹³ The country had been divided into African Land and European Land through the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, amended and re-named the Land Tenure Act in 1969. African and European interests were to be paramount in their respective areas. European interests were served largely by specialized ministries and departments and by local-government structures.

mothers (usually the wives of domestic workers) who were members of the *ruwadzano* group (a women's bible-study group) of the Highlands Presbyterian church; then with the Courtesy Campaign and later with the Adult Literacy Campaign.

Racial discrimination, favouring whites, was entrenched, but it was never of the scale, thoroughness or intensity of apartheid in South Africa. Bigotry and stupidity among most white people did, however, abound, and it was bolstered by legislation introduced gradually over the years. Land apportionment, for instance, had neatly separated the races in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas, members of different ethnic groups lived in separate residential areas; agricultural regions were designated for the use of a specific race.

There was little opportunity for interaction between Europeans and Africans in the towns, except at the workplace, where the latter, on account of their lesser education, were practically always the subordinates. Very few were in management positions above a first-line supervisory level. Any government or municipal official you met in town – from the clerk in the post office, to the parking-meter supervisor, to the member-in-charge of the local police station – was white. But waiters in hotels and in the few restaurants and cafés that existed were black. Domestic workers were black. Most educated black people that whites had the opportunity to meet at the time were teachers or nurses – yet teachers and nurses worked mainly in segregated educational institutions or in segregated health facilities. Government-employed white teachers earned considerably more than their black counterparts.

In practice, though not in law, apprenticeships were largely denied to young Africans. European employers simply did not take them on. Trade unions resisted Africans moving into the skilled labour force. As skilled labour became crucially short for the country's requirements, job fragmentation was resorted to. This led to a proliferation of only semi-skilled African artisans, but it at least provided employment opportunities.

African workers, respected as fathers in their families, were commonly referred to as 'boys'; African women, respected as mothers in their community, were referred to as 'girls' or 'nannies'. Domestic workers were referred to as 'house boys', 'garden boys' and 'house girls', farm-workers simply as 'boys'. The first-line supervisor was the 'boss boy'. There were, of course, worse and patently derogatory terms that were used to refer to African people in the third person.

In banks and post offices there were ordinary queues and queues for 'messengers', meaning for Africans. 'Boys' and 'nannies' were not supposed to use lifts in high-rise buildings. 'Imagine,' a white acquaintance said to

me. 'A black man and my wife alone in a lift, with the 'boy' at liberty to press the buttons ...'

The Land Tenure Act had countless other ramifications. Hotels had to apply for a permit to become multiracial. Most hotels, bars and caf  s displayed a sign that said 'Right of Admission Reserved', which meant, in effect, that Africans would not be admitted. Public toilets in town centres were segregated, but there were hardly any public toilets for Africans.

Interracial marriage was not illegal, as it was in South Africa, but it was uncommon and discouraged by social sanctions and legal hurdles. House-owners in a white suburb were not allowed to sell or lease their property to a member of another race. Eventually Marimba Park was designated as a 'mixed-race' suburb, where mixed-race couples could build, buy or rent a house.

I remember being asked by the leader of a women's organization whether, since I spoke German, I would visit a German woman married to a black man who was living in Highfield township (a high-density African residential area in Salisbury) and was lonely. I did. I found her sitting on an easy chair in the living room, surrounded by a number of African women who were sitting on the floor, their backs straight and erect, their legs stretched out at right angles, staring mutely at her. They claimed to be her husband's relatives, she said, who had come to pay their respects, but she suspected that most were not and that they had simply come to gape at the oddity of a white woman living in Highfield.

I met her husband too, who was a lawyer. He had found employment in a white-run law office without much trouble, but he could not rent a house in a European suburb. His colleagues had advised him to rent the house in his wife's name, but he was too proud to do that and to face a possible 'scandal' if found out. He was preparing to move to Zambia where, he told me, 'Africanization is in full swing; why should I not take advantage of that?' He added: 'If I could put a few kilometres between me and my extended family - who are a trial to me as well as to my wife by their constant visiting - I would stay in my own country.'

Indeed, people were not supposed even to have a guest of another race to stay the night on their property. A permit was required for such an event. Miss Alice Sanderson, director of the Adult Literacy Organization of Rhodesia (ALOR), chose to ignore this regulation when she once accommodated Janet Matema, one of her literacy teachers, for three weeks. A neighbour could have reported her, but none of them did.

In the European areas, according to the Land Tenure Act, 'European interests were paramount'. No African was allowed to own land there and African businesses were permitted on the outskirts of the towns and in

the townships only. Although African labour was essential to the growth of the economy, Africans were not expected to settle permanently in the townships, so there were hardly any home-ownership schemes. This led to the high-rise hostels in Harari (now called Mbare) for 'single men', most of whom actually had wives and families in the TTLs, to where they were expected to retire at the end of their working lives.

African interests were 'paramount' in the TTLs. No people of another race were allowed to own land or to open a business there. Indeed, they had to get a permit to enter a TTL – except when travelling through one, in a car, on a national road. I remember Miss Lamb, Co-ordinator of the Catholic Women's Clubs (CWC), coming to renew her permit when I was working in Internal Affairs. She was very well known to the authorities and usually got one valid for a year. Few whites ever ventured into a TTL, except the Mountain Club of Southern Rhodesia, who always had to request the relevant District Commissioner for permission when going for their monthly all-day walks in a TTL. Most rural people had little interaction with Europeans, except with District Commissioners and their staff, with agricultural and other extension staff, and with missionaries. Their knowledge of conditions in town came mainly from the men who worked in an urban area and came home for holidays, or from their own infrequent visits to town.



This social segregation caused whites and blacks to develop elaborate myths about each other. It was fortunate indeed that Janet Matema and I had become friends through our voluntary work in establishing the Adult Literacy Campaign in 1961, from which an NGO eventually grew. Janet had no inferiority complex about being black and no ill-feelings towards white people. We had lengthy discussions about everything – from issues concerning day-to-day living, to spiritual matters, to customs and mores, to politics. It was from her that I got my initial glimpses into what African people thought and felt. Their reasons for resenting the ill-fated Native Land Husbandry Act spring immediately to mind.¹⁴ To Janet the idea that her only son, growing up in town (because his father had already spent most of his life in town and had never farmed himself) would lose his

¹⁴ The Native Land Husbandry Act (No. 52 of 1951) was hailed by agronomists in many countries as a progressive piece of legislation to guide the implementation of land reform in the TTLs, which were in danger of becoming degraded. One of its serious flaws was that it failed to take sufficient cognizance of the importance of 'communal' land tenure and of cattle in the social fabric of the African people. Nationalist politicians lost no time in exploiting the people's resentment, and the Act's implementation was later abandoned.

right to land at his forebears' home was anathema to her. According to tradition, the right to land is the birthright of every African male.

Janet was frank about what she felt were affronts to the dignity of African people, springing from racial discrimination in law or in practice. At the same time she spoke out against stereotypes or hostility expressed towards Europeans. I remember her confronting a young firebrand nationalist politician in the township who was stirring up ill feelings against whites. She addressed him politely by name as VaShamuyarira,¹⁵ a name which meant nothing to me at the time, and then told him not to generalize. The man was no other than Nathan Shamuyarira, a prominent post-independence ZANU(PF) minister. From Janet I learned a few lessons in personal courage.

Regrettably, during the township disturbances in the 1960s, as Janet and I stood together under her peach tree, two young men shouted at her: 'If we see that white woman here again, we will burn your house down.' I did not visit her again for many months. It was very difficult for her to visit me in Greendale, of course, since she did not own a car. Public transport to white suburbs was underdeveloped, to say the least.

It was difficult to bring up children to be non-racial. We tried. There was little opportunity for urban children of different races to play together, except for white employers' children who, while they were very small, played with the children of domestic workers living on the same grounds, in premises of a vastly different standard. They played together largely in the 'kia' (the domestic worker's quarters) or in the garden. Older children of domestics were sent to the rural areas for schooling. Children of farmers played with the children of farm-workers in the compound until the farmers' children left for boarding school. Thereafter, contact on an equal level usually ceased.

During their early childhood, many farmers' children became fluent in the Shona or Ndebele language, which stood them in good stead in later life. African languages were not taught in European schools until 1979, and even then not at a suitably intensive level. African children were, however, taught English.

After independence I had an African boss who had gained a bursary to do his A-levels in Britain during the 1960s. He subsequently went to university in Britain and worked there for several years until returning to Zimbabwe just after independence in 1980. He recounted:

I grew up in the township of Gwelo and was somewhat of a street urchin. At the edge of the township there was a fish-and-

¹⁵ 'Va-' is an honorific prefix, in this case equivalent to 'Mr'.

chip shop run by a Greek immigrant who, I realized later, spoke very little English. I used to go there sometimes, stretch my money up towards the counter and say 'fish and chips'. The man packed them, stretched them towards me and said 'two and six'. He took my coin, I took his fish and chips and departed.

Once I threw a stone at a passing car driven by a European, not because I hated anybody, but because it seemed a daring thing to do. A white policeman saw me, gave me a clip around the ear, which I knew I deserved, and I ran away.

This was the sum total of my interaction with white people until I reached England. While doing my A-levels there, sometimes a well-meaning adult would say to me, 'Oh, you are from Rhodesia? I know another Rhodesian youngster, I must bring you together.'

So the black and the white Rhodesian youths were introduced, but they didn't know what to say to each other. In their homeland the war had already started, which further tied their tongues. Black domestic workers probably had the best insight into the day-to-day lives of white people.

Above all, very few Europeans learned first-hand how Africans felt and what they thought politically. They largely believed what white politicians told them through the mass media about what African people thought or understood. Indeed, very few opportunities for discussion existed, exceptions being the Capricorn Society, the National Affairs Association and, later, Ranche House College. Press censorship, imposed in 1965, saw to it that African opinion appeared in the local press less and less, and newspapers that supported African nationalists were banned.¹⁶

I called racial discrimination 'stupid' at the time because, as far as I could see, 'emerging' Africans largely aspired to white middle-class values and life-styles. I argued that if we Europeans allowed them to integrate naturally, and gave them the equal rights that they understandably wanted, they would defend such values and life-styles and not be prone to the influence of 'political agitators'. By failing to integrate the black and white populations socially, we created a fertile soil for militant nationalism to grow – first among the educated urban elite.

As for the Europeans, there was not the wide continuum of political opinion that there had been in South Africa, which included communists, liberals, African nationalists and extreme Afrikanerdom. During the Smith period, the vast majority of the Rhodesian whites formed a homogeneous

¹⁶ The *African Daily News* had been banned in August 1964; *Moto* was banned in November 1974; *Umbowo* was banned in January 1977; the *Zimbabwe Times* was banned in September 1978. See 'Newspapers', *Tabex Encyclopedia Zimbabwe* (Worcester [UK]: Arlington Business Corporation, 1989) 282–4.

group and supported the Rhodesian Front (RF). Ian Smith's portrait was displayed in many a home. There was a middle-of-the-road, 'left-wing' party, the Centre Party, but it had little support and influence.

Government was largely in the hands of the Europeans. According to the 1969 Constitution, both the voters' roll and the constituencies according to which members of the House of Assembly and the Senate were elected were based on race, along with educational and income or property qualifications.¹⁷ Consequently the electorate was predominantly white, and so were the MPs and Senators. Europeans, elected on the European voters' roll in single-member constituencies, held 50 of the 66 seats in the House of Assembly. Of the sixteen seats reserved for Africans, eight were elected on the African voters' rolls in single-member constituencies (four in Matabeleland and four in Mashonaland), and eight were elected by electoral colleges composed of chiefs, headmen and members of African Councils (four in Matabeleland and four in Mashonaland). Europeans held ten of the 23 seats in the Senate; another ten were reserved for African chiefs (five in Matabeleland and five in Mashonaland) elected by the Council of Chiefs. A further three Senators were appointed by the President.

Racial discrimination was also keenly felt by people of Asian (mainly Indian) descent and by people of mixed race. Since I had little direct contact with them, I could only imagine this, though I sometimes read about it in the newspapers. I learned about it first-hand only years later.

Indians and Coloureds lived in segregated suburbs and their children had their own schools. The 1976 *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Racial Discrimination* brought some of their grievances to the fore, but how many Europeans ever read that document? For a housewife like me it was almost impossible to leap across the ditch of non-contact. I remember seeing Indian women in the streets and shops in the city and wishing I could meet them socially. However, I had no idea how I could achieve this. I would never have dared to walk up to one and say something like: 'I would so much like to meet Indian women, may I invite you to my home? And would you perhaps bring a friend?'

I managed to make friends with only one Coloured family during the 1960s. While studying by correspondence through UNISA, I met Peter Weale, a teacher, who was also studying one of the same subjects that I

¹⁷ Europeans, Asians and Coloureds: an annual income of \$1,800 or more for the previous two years or immovable property worth \$3,600 or more, with either demand lowered by a third if the person had completed four years of secondary education. Africans: an annual income of \$600 or more for the two previous years or immovable property worth \$1,200 or more, with either demand lowered by a third if the person had completed two years of secondary education. Constitution of Rhodesia (Act No. 54 of 1969) and Electoral Act (No. 56 of 1969).

was during one particular year. We met regularly during that year, at my house or his, to discuss our studies. During the school holidays either I took Sue and Caroline to his home or he brought his children, Denzil and Beverley, who were of a similar age, to ours. The children happily played together, and our respective spouses were comfortable with our interaction, Peter's wife preparing many a tea or meal for us, as I did for the Weales.

With Janet Matema I shared the vision of helping adults to become literate; with Peter Weale I shared the struggle to obtain a degree by correspondence. You needed a shared goal to be able to meet on equal terms across the colour bar, and you needed to go out and seek a goal to share.



**Surrounded by my family (clockwise from the top left):
Sue, Rolf, Yvonne, Caroline**



1973





I was appointed Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) for Mashonaland South on 1 January 1973. The most exciting, the most joyful (at the beginning), the most painful (towards the end), and certainly the most personally significant part of my working life was about to begin.

Almost immediately after my appointment I was sent to Bulawayo, to spend a fortnight in the field with Arlene Fullard, the provincial officer for Matabeleland. Arlene was to show me some of the work that her field staff, the Women Advisers, were involved in. The Women Advisers were primarily animators who helped rural women to articulate their needs and organize themselves to meet them, largely through self-help. Their correct title, given to them when the Community Development Section for women was formed, was actually Women's Organizations' Advisers. This described their role more accurately, but it was never used.

My time with Arlene in the south of the country is a blur in my memory now: rattling along in her old car on bumpy roads through hot TTLs; traditional homesteads, large families; heat, dust and more dust; meagre crops, poor grass cover.

If I were a woman toiling away in this hot and arid land, would I have the energy to try to improve my homestead, my farming, my life, to engage in community projects, I asked myself. I noted the easy relationship between Arlene and her field staff, the mutual respect, the frankness. We whites harboured a stereotype at the time, convinced that 'Africans always tell you what they think you want to hear'. I observed none of this between Arlene and the Women Advisers. 'Ndebele women are like this, very frank and direct,' she told me. I noted the Women Advisers' spotless and always neat uniforms, pressed with charcoal-filled irons. I listened to what they had been doing, what had worked out, what had not.

Arlene had an easy laugh and an extraordinarily sensuous aura about her. I noted her causing a stir among the cadets and younger officers (all male) at every district station, laughing it off with good humour,



Arlene Fullard

not telling them really very much about what had transpired in respect of her work.

I remember an evening in a swimming pool at some country hotel under the sparkling, star-specked sky, half floating in tepid water, where she told me about her family, her two sisters, her father – who thought that the sun shone out of his three daughters and encouraged them in every way.

I gathered from my tour that Women Advisers are self-starters, and that their Provincial Officers have to be. That suited me fine.



I then spent weeks at head office, reading innumerable files, mostly correspondence. My boss, Miss Wyn Wilson, the Senior Community Development Officer (Women), introduced me to all the staff at headquarters, in Old Shell House in Baker Avenue.¹ It was a time-worn colonial building, three storeys high, built around a courtyard and its annex. It had a creaking old-fashioned lift with an iron grid as a door and smelled rather musty.

Miss Wilson took me from office to office, all inhabited by males, and introduced me, telling me – before we went in – the rank and name of the man behind the desk, who would get up to shake my hand. This introductory morning left me completely bemused. I had not the faintest idea what all their titles meant and had not yet grasped the structure of the ministry. But did get one message: The really important men had a carpet, easy chairs and a coffee table in their office, and, throughout, the size of desk was a clear indication of rank. Alas, I could not remember any of the names and, when I met one of the still nameless in the lift, I did not remember whether or not he had had a carpet in his office or what the size of his desk was.

That inimitable man that I had met in the corridor before the interview was in the lift again – short, stocky, round face. He made some similar comment about women again, and again I gave as good as I got. I had no idea who he was, and found out only later that he was Noel Hunt, a Deputy Secretary, second highest in the hierarchy of the ministry, more feared than esteemed. Having given him the frank and irreverent answer he deserved, without knowing his exalted rank, I saw no reason why I should not continue in the same vein. After our meeting in the lift, and when I was finally stationed at Province, he used to send me messages via the switchboard operator. They consisted of some quotation from the works

¹ Baker Avenue is now named Nelson Mandela Avenue. The ministry also occupied the old police station adjacent to Old Shell House.

of a philosopher/literary genius/misanthropic writer (he was extremely well read and had a phenomenal memory), which the telephonist had to write down. His quotation invariably denigrated human kind, women in particular, sociology, psychology, or any form of altruism. He also dictated a deadline by which I had to respond. I always did.

It was a stupid game, which Hunt clearly enjoyed. He also appreciated that I did not seem to be in awe of him, as most men in the ministry obviously were. For me it was entertaining for a while, but in time both his quotations and the effort it took me to locate a suitable rejoinder became tedious.

I learned later that Noel Hunt usually had a clear desk except for a telephone, some writing materials and a very thick, beautiful leather-bound book entitled, with gold lettering, *The African's Contribution to Civilization*. When he had summoned you for an appointment, he deliberately left the room at some stage. While he was out, curiosity or genuine interest getting the better of you, you could not help opening this impressive-looking book. It contained nothing but blank pages.



My induction into the functions of this vast ministry, which at the time comprised some 2,300 staff country-wide, was exceedingly poor, and so it was also for all my colleagues who joined later. Miss Wilson had no concept of induction training, and nor had I, with my limited experience of employment, so I did not really know what to ask. Dorienne Graham-Jolly, my friend from university days, who joined about a year later, had an easier time, because she was an 'Internal Affairs baby'. Her father – Eldon Trollip, now retired on the grounds of severe ill health – had been a Native Commissioner,² and she and her three sisters had spent their early childhood on district stations. Her mother, Edna, who had led the life of the wife of a Native Commissioner, was a vast source of anecdotal information for us.

Gloria Passmore's seminal book describes the multitude of functions of this ministry.³ I read it much later – it would have given me a better induction than the one I received verbally or absorbed through osmosis.

² The Native Affairs Department was revamped into the Ministry of Internal Affairs in 1962, and Native Commissioners became District Commissioners. Eldon Trollip attained the rank of District Commissioner in 1932, was later promoted to Provincial Commissioner Manicaland, then to Undersecretary (Community Development) before being transferred on promotion to Secretary for Defence.

³ Gloria C. Passmore, *The National Policy of Community Development in Rhodesia, with special reference to local government in the African rural areas* (Salisbury: University of Rhodesia, Department of Political Science, 1972).

Briefly, it was headed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, to whom the Permanent Secretary for Internal Affairs (a civil servant) was accountable. At head-office level, it was divided into three sections: the Administration Branch, the Community Development Branch and the Primary Development Branch, each headed by a Deputy Secretary. Beneath them were officers of the rank of Provincial Commissioner and District Commissioner, who had gradually climbed the promotion ladder from the entry grade of Cadet in the districts and had vast experience in the field.

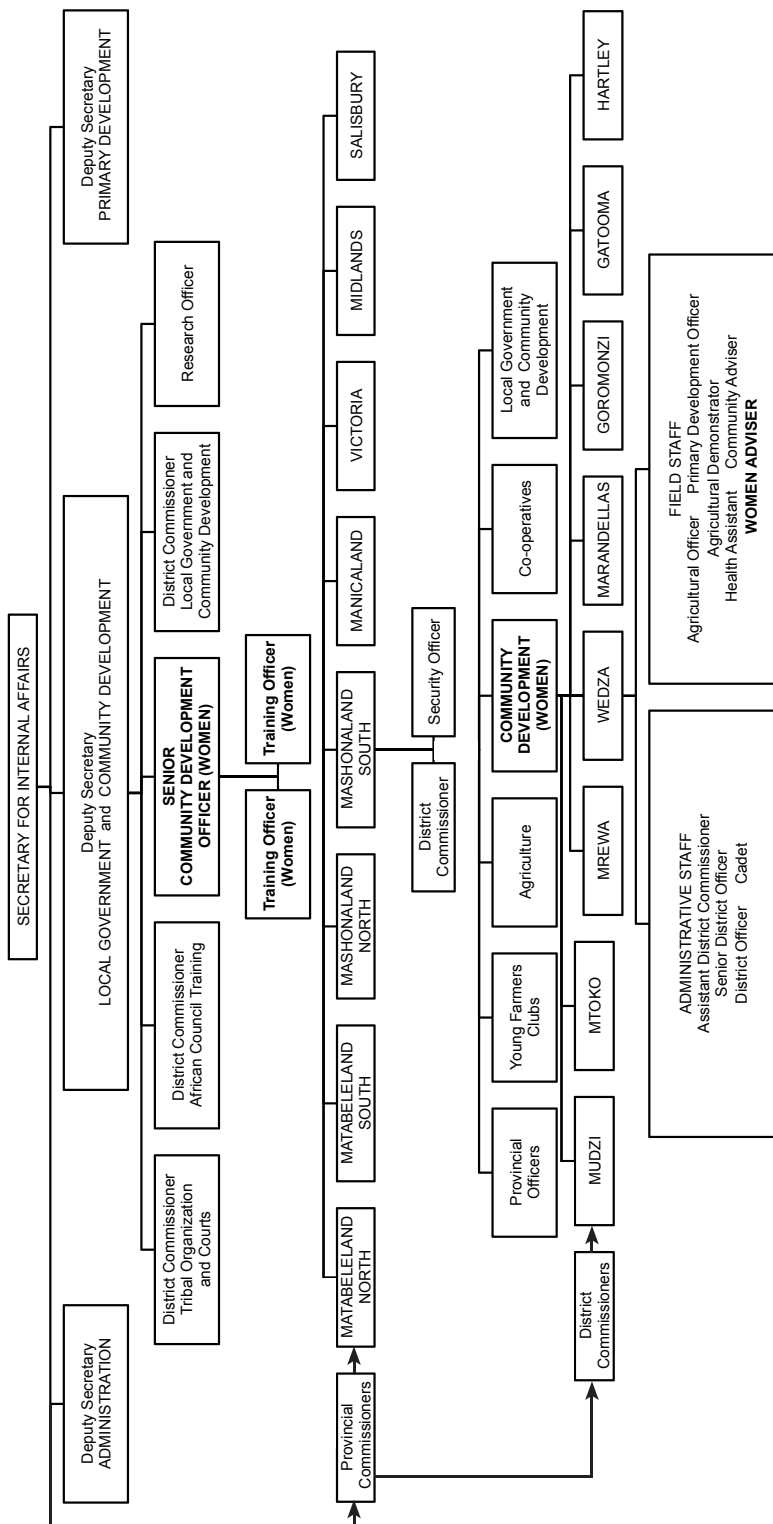
A career in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Administration Branch, began as a Cadet on a district station and proceeded on promotion to District Officer to Senior District Officer to Assistant District Commissioner (ADC) to District Commissioner (DC) and then – through a bottleneck – to Provincial Commissioner (PC). Points for promotion were awarded for length of service plus the passing of a Shona or Ndebele language examination and – since a DC also had a judicial function, presiding over the District Commissioner's Court – the passing of an examination on customary law and relevant statute law. By the late 1960s the ministry had introduced accelerated promotion opportunities if one entered the service with a degree, though you still had to pass the ministry's internal examinations. This was not necessarily welcomed by some of the 'old guard', who were of the opinion that no degree could make up for years and years of lowly practical experience.

In the seven provincial and fifty district offices, the administrative and development functions mentioned above were combined under the authority of the relevant PC and DC, supported by specialist officers (e.g. for Agriculture, Primary Development, etc.) of various ranks. I was to be one of these specialist officers, at provincial level, to be responsible for community development with women in the African areas.

During the years I was engaged in this work, the war for independence accelerated and consequently semi-military and civil-defence functions were added to the load of the DC's many responsibilities. In time, in some districts, they came to overshadow all other tasks. A vast number of additional staff with paramilitary functions were added to district stations.

I was to absorb the complexities of the ministry only very gradually over the coming year, and probably never fully. My poor induction was never augmented in the provincial office. My PC presumably assumed that I had been adequately briefed. In any case, I was raring to go, eager to immerse myself in fieldwork without being held back any longer.

One of the highlights of that initial phase was the days I spent at Domboshawa National Training Centre (run by the Branch of Community Development Training of the Ministry of Education, African Division),



some 30km outside Salisbury, at the edge of Chinamora TTL, simply observing and interacting with the Women Advisers engaged in their initial training course. I felt that they all had something exceptional about them. Later I came to appreciate that Miss Wilson had an uncanny talent for selecting the right type of woman to be trained for this job. Arlene had also developed it, and I think all we provincial officers did in time. I sensed that the fledgling Women Advisers were not only being trained for a job but were on a journey of self-discovery – discovering what they were capable of. I felt a strong kinship with them; I was on that journey myself.



After years of preparation, deliberation and the restructuring of some ministries, including the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the adoption of a national policy of community development as the basis for district administration, local government and technical and economic advancement in African areas was officially confirmed by Prime Minister Sir Edgar Whitehead in June 1962 in a speech to the Legislative Assembly.⁴ The DC became the ‘custodian of community development’ in African areas.

Interestingly, two sections were created within the ministry to foster community development – one targeting men, the other targeting women. Paragraph 16 of the *Statement* made it clear that community development had a definite purpose – ‘leading to local government’, which was later to take over the running of schools and clinics:

16 (a) ... at the district level, Government’s primary *purpose* is local self-government. The *means* or process whereby this purpose is to be promoted is community development.

Local-government structures were not entirely new in rural African areas. Indeed, by the time the African Councils Act (No. 19 of 1957) was passed, some fifty Native Councils already existed, formed under the Native Councils Act (No. 38 of 1937). However, the policy of community development was to give local government a new and stronger impetus, and over the next decade a total of some 450 African Councils were established in the TTLs and APAs. In the TTLs, they covered the areas of jurisdiction of one or of several chiefs.

Below the councils, where they existed, community boards and project committees were to be formed to allow for closer identification between people and development structures. Where there were no councils, such

⁴ It is summarized in: Rhodesia. *Statement of Policy and Directive by the Prime Minister: Local Government and Community Development. The Role of Ministries and Co-ordination* (Salisbury: Government Printer, Session Papers, C.S.R. 44, 1965).

committees and boards were initiated first, with the expectation that, sooner or later, projects too large or too complex for them would stimulate the formation of a council.

While the policy was being developed, important political changes had taken place within the country. The government formed by the United Federal Party led by Sir Edgar Whitehead was replaced in December 1962 by one formed by the Rhodesia Front, led first by Winston Field and later by Ian Douglas Smith. The predominantly white electorate and government had made a significant ideological move to the right, partly fuelled by the influx of white refugees from the Congo on account of the violence that erupted after that country had been granted independence by Belgium. Thus, the government that was to implement the policy of community development was considerably more right-wing in orientation than the government that had prepared for and initiated it. On the left of the political spectrum, African nationalism was on the rise and its emotive force was hopelessly underestimated by the white population.



In order to stimulate development and the formation of locally initiated organizations, a new category of government extension worker was trained and deployed in 1963 – the Community Adviser. From a total staff of 440 Agricultural Demonstrators (all male) employed in the TTLs and APAs, 252 men who volunteered for the job were selected.

Community Advisers, Agricultural Demonstrators and Health Assistants (the latter also all male) were transferable and were given government housing. They had opportunities for promotion into supervisory posts within their ministries/departments. The first task of Community Advisers was to get to know thoroughly the community to which they had been transferred: their customs, formal and informal leadership structures and patterns, the people's development needs and wants. Thereafter it was their task to help people develop their capacity to meet these needs and wants by means of organized self-help, sometimes also feeding in their own ideas about progress that could be initiated by the community itself.

As a result of their animation work, local project committees and community boards were formed, the latter taking responsibility for development projects benefiting the populations of larger areas. The Community Adviser also forged links between local structures and technical advisers and advised them where financial assistance for projects might be found. A non-directive approach was fundamental to the policy of community development and hence to the Community Adviser's work.

The local committees and boards thus formed concerned themselves with physical development – roads, bridges, weirs, small dams, community halls, beer-halls, clinics and dispensaries, fencing and controlled-grazing schemes. Local farming groups organized agricultural shows. In keeping with tradition, the leadership of project committees, though generally elected by acclamation with women present, was almost exclusively male. Chiefs, headmen, kraal heads and heads of household were men. Even if the husbands were absent in urban employment, they continued to make the decisions on all important family matters, even including whether or not a sick child should be taken to the clinic.

Though many of the rural women did attend public meetings, they were not expected to speak unless they were very elderly. The husband – or, in his absence, the male household head of the extended family – was deemed to speak for the family. It would have been seen as shameful for a wife to speak. Women were, however, expected to work on community projects. Once a project was agreed upon, households were required to supply labour according to their size on a roster basis. Not only was it up to the resident male household head to decide who would work on the project, when husbands were employed in towns it fell to their wives to work in their stead. When women could see that their families would benefit from a project, they did this most willingly.

Stan Fynes-Clinton, DC Sinoia during my time, confirmed this in his book about the life of a District Commissioner:

I realized the importance of working with women in order to implement various projects to improve the welfare of the people. The women were more concerned about the welfare of their families than the men were, and therefore they actively supported any scheme aimed at improving health, livestock, crop yields and the protection of water supplies. I could see that, behind closed doors, the females were able to exert considerable influence on their menfolk to support and participate in such schemes. Later in my career, I often met with women's groups to discuss the benefits of projects, and I knew that, if the ideas were accepted by them, those meetings would yield results.⁵

Women had interests additional to those that they shared with men. They wanted to modernize their homes and households, to improve the health of their families, to improve their families' incomes and standards of living, to learn modern farming methods to this effect, to find additional ways of creating incomes of their own, to educate their daughters as well

⁵ S.H. Fynes-Clinton, *The Shattered Jewel* (Harare: The author, 2010), 86.

as their sons. Some wanted to improve their own education, to have more say in their communities and even to participate in local civic affairs, a revolutionary idea at the time.



While Community Advisers were being re-trained and deployed in large numbers, an insightful and far-sighted Deputy Secretary for Internal Affairs, Roger Howman, decided that women were a useful resource, if not a powerful force, to be harnessed for the development of the Tribal Trust Lands and African Purchase Areas. Thus, a woman officer, Miss Winifred D. (Wyn) Wilson, was appointed in 1964, with the brief to make proposals for the establishment of a community development section for women. Within a year or so, Mrs Betty Mtero was appointed to assist her as Training Officer for rural women.

Wyn Wilson was Irish, a trained teacher of mathematics, but had worked as a Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) administrator during World War II. Moving to South Africa, she worked as a social worker in Cape Town's District Six and later in Mpopoma Township in Bulawayo. She was very active in the International Federation of Business and Professional Women and, with their sponsorship, had studied welfare and community development projects in the USA in 1964.

Betty Mtero, a mother of four children, was married to a teacher who later rose through the administrative ranks of the Ministry of Education. She had first trained as a Domestic Science teacher, then obtained qualifications in social work and became a social worker in Bulawayo's Njube township, where she met Wyn Wilson. While Training Officer with the Women's Section she completed a Certificate in Adult Education at the University of Rhodesia.

Between 1965 and 1966, Wyn Wilson travelled alone, and sometimes with Betty Mtero, for thousands of kilometres to assess the needs of rural African women. Betty Mtero held innumerable courses for rural women in the Chief's Hall of Fort Victoria's Mucheke township for the same purpose. Then, with Betty Mtero's



Wyn Wilson



Betty Mtero

assistance, Wyn Wilson formulated the *modus operandi* of 'women's work' within the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

The Community Development Section (Women) became operational in 1967 when funds were made available for the training and stationing of the first fifteen female field staff, the so-called Women Advisers. Initially they were supported and supervised by Wyn Wilson and Betty Mtero directly. The first two provincial supervisory posts were created in 1970 and filled by Arlene Fullard in Matabeleland and Sheila Hawkins in Mashonaland.⁶ Wyn Wilson assumed the title Senior Community Development Officer (Women). A training centre for women – the Roger Howman Hall – was built in the African township in Fort Victoria and headed by Betty Mtero. A second Training Officer, Nancy Laws, was employed at head office. A further four PCDOW posts were added in 1972. The Section received funds for the training and deployment of twenty new Women Advisers per year.

Wyn Wilson had conceived of the role of the Section as follows:⁷

- To nurture latent talent, goodwill and the burning desire to learn.
- To foster self-reliance and the confidence to initiate action.
- To develop the ability to define problems and find solutions.
- To encourage a sense of community service and individual responsibility to pass on knowledge.
- To reap a rich harvest – health, progress, a happy family and community life among the people of Rhodesia.

The Women Advisers were to be the 'animators' through which these goals were to be achieved.



Women Advisers were selected from the areas in which they would later work and they worked from their own homes, unlike male fieldworkers, whether Community Advisers, Agricultural Demonstrators or Health Assistants. Usually they were married women with children, though widows and divorcees were also accepted. They were not subject to transfer and had no claim to government housing. There were also no senior posts created and thus they had no promotion opportunities.

Since, in both Shona and Ndebele custom, marriage was patrilineal (and still is today), a woman had to move to her husband's home when

⁶ The minimum qualifications were a degree or diploma, preferably in social sciences or social work. In practice, all the Community Development Officers appointed had a degree.

⁷ *A Decade of Challenge and Achievement: The Story behind the Community Development Section (Women) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Rhodesia* (Salisbury: Spectrum, 1976).

she married. He usually lived in the vicinity of his father and other male relatives of patrilineal descent. A young married woman therefore had to adapt to the local customs of her in-laws' place of abode, and had to make herself acceptable to the extended family and to the community she moved into. By the time she was selected as a Women Adviser, that process was complete. Obviously, though, she had to get to know, and make herself acceptable to, the people of a much wider geographical area. Like the Community Adviser, she had to become acquainted with the formal and informal leaders, the expertise that was available locally, as well as the needs and wants of the individual women and women's groups she was to work with.

The Women Adviser's job was similar in method to that of the Community Adviser, though they had different target populations. Advising community boards and project committees in charge of infrastructural development and councils was the prerogative of Community Advisers, so they worked largely with men. Women Advisers worked mainly with women.

Summarizing their detailed job description, their role was to:

- help women to identify their and their families' needs, to decide how to meet them, and to achieve their goals through their own initiative and their own resources – as far as possible;
- encourage women to form organized interest groups to meet their needs;
- identify and encourage leadership potential among them;
- encourage them to widen their knowledge by participating in educational opportunities offered and to organize local courses and 'look-and-learn' visits for themselves;
- help interest groups to overcome organizational difficulties and with programme planning;
- motivate women to attain better standards of living for their families;⁸
- stimulate women's participation in community projects organized by community boards and councils;
- help them to gain the support of tribal leaders for their goals;
- liaise with and co-ordinate her work with that of field staff employed by Internal Affairs and other ministries, and act as

⁸ In the economic field, this meant encouraging women to recognize the adoption of modern farming methods as one of the chief means of improving family income. In the field of health, this meant encouraging women to work towards the provision of health services, to avail themselves of existing ones, including family-planning services, and to achieve better standards of nutrition, sanitation and hygiene.

links between women and the district administration, helping women to understand government policy and making the administration aware of women's needs and goals; and, last, but not least,

- disseminate ideas.

Women Advisers were involved in all aspects of community development and liaised closely with their male counterparts. As mentioned, they encouraged women to participate in community projects directed by men. In addition, where men were not interested in supporting or helping to finance an infrastructural project desired by women, they encouraged them to form their own project groups and raise the necessary funds themselves.

In most areas where Women Advisers were stationed, women's clubs had already been established. In these clubs, members learned modern homecraft skills, including knitting, sewing, crocheting, baking, the cooking of non-traditional dishes, balanced nutrition, the prevention of water-borne and contagious diseases, environmental hygiene, and methods of conserving fuel. In addition, women found companionship outside the extended family (based on male kinship) in which they lived, learned organizing skills and democratic methods of 'self-governance'.

Women Advisers obviously worked with these groups, but they were not skills trainers. In fact, they were expressly forbidden to teach homecraft skills. Imparting this knowledge remained the responsibility of the various voluntary organizations to which the women's clubs were affiliated. Women Advisers 'merely' helped the clubs to develop planning and organizing capabilities and women in general to articulate their needs. Women formed many other types of interest groups, over and above the homecraft clubs, as I was soon to learn when going into the field.

As can be seen from the goals that Wyn Wilson had set, the main focus of the Community Development Section (Women) was to develop *people*, i.e. to help women to develop *themselves*, and then, from their own need for self-actualization, to take part in community development activities. Not that we ever used the term 'self-actualization' in those days. Indeed, our work and our writing at the time was singularly jargon-free. But, verbally expressed or not, it was the driving force behind the work of our best PCDOs, and, I came to realize in time, the driving force behind the dedication of the Women Advisers. Perhaps it was the soil on which the deep bond between me and the Women Advisers germinated and developed.



When I had started work, Caroline and Yvonne were already in Switzerland. True to the verbal agreement between me and my new employers, I had given a month's notice after working for only one month, and in March departed to Switzerland myself, to be reunited with my parents and my three brothers for the first time in twelve years (two of them had married since I last saw them), and, at the end of our stay there, to bring the girls home. I re-applied for my job with a post-dated letter, left with my boss, and was re-appointed at the beginning of May.

Although I was re-appointed to the provincial post on my return, I was still stationed at head office. One of the first things I did was to re-visit the Women Advisers in training at Domboshawa. I noted their faces immediately. The trainees' countenance and bearing had changed visibly: they had gained in self-confidence, were somehow radiant. I was filled with joy at their transformation.

On 1 June 1973 I started work, at last, in the provincial offices, Mashonaland South. An office near the end of the second-floor corridor in Harrob House, 21 Forbes Avenue, Salisbury, was to be my station for the coming years. It was rather ugly, I thought, furnished with a worn brown regulation desk, three metal chairs with brown vinyl seats, a grey metal filing cupboard, and a worn brown wooden shelf that eventually filled up with grey-black mottled lever arch files. No bookcase. A round bathroom globe light stuck in the middle of the ceiling. No view. No curtains. I was told that curtains were not necessary as the window was high up on the wall and nobody could see in anyway.

The offices of the Provincial Commissioner, Mashonaland North, were in the same building, occupying the first floor. Sheila Hawkins, my colleague in that province, welcomed me and introduced me to all the officers of both provinces. I noticed that nobody had their name or designation on the door. I soon had a name shield made for myself - at my cost, of course, for such things could not be requested in government service, or had to be put into the budget estimates for the next financial year. The rather long shield, with my long name, in black plastic with white writing raised some eyebrows. I brought some pictures, pieces of fabric and ornaments from home to beautify my office and make it look more welcoming and personal.

I was fortunate that on that first day there was a conference of District

Commissioners for the province. I was formally introduced to them all by the PC, Robert (Bob) Woollacott, who gave a short talk on the importance of the role of the Women's Section.

I was the first woman officer ever to be appointed to the province – or, more specifically, the first woman with any decision-making power; other women had been typists/receptionists, telephonists or filing clerks. From now on I attended all the DCs' conferences. For the first few, I made sure that I sat far away from where the tea tray would be put. Once the DCs were accustomed to the idea that I could not automatically be expected to pour the tea because I was the only woman in the room, I did not mind doing it. On that first day, I noticed that the DCs sometimes spoke hesitantly, appearing slightly discomfited. I guessed with some amusement that they probably had had to clean up their language a bit!



I announced that I would be undertaking a familiarization tour to all Women Advisers' areas during the coming two months and that I would send out a circular giving dates. Obviously I would make a courtesy call to the DC's office first. The first rounds of my all-day visits to Women Advisers' areas were an unmitigated joy for me. In such a little time I learned more about life in the rural areas than I had in the fifteen years I had lived in this country. I had, at last, arrived in Africa!

During June, I managed to visit seven Women Advisers,¹ and during July another seven.² In some areas, I had to interview applicants on the same day for the Home Economics Demonstrators' initial training course, due to be held at Domboshawa in August. I was also asked to present some curtains that Miss Wilson had promised to two groups of women in Sanyati TTL who had raised the funds for and built their own women's club training centres as community projects. Otherwise, I left it up to the Women Advisers to decide what they wanted to show me.

None of them gave me a manicured VIP tour. Mostly I met interest groups that I would have met that day anyway, and after the initial stir of having a visitor, which the groups always took to be an honour, I could observe what they would have normally been doing. So I met women

¹ Mrs B. Chida, Gatooma (Sanyati); Mrs R. Chivanga, Goromonzi (Seke, Shangure, Rusike); Mrs D. Nyakabau, Mrewa (Pfungwe, Uzumba); Mrs I. Gurupira, Mtoko; Mrs M. Chitumba, Wedza; Mrs F. Nkomo, Hartley (Mondoro), and, at the request of the DC, a well-known voluntary worker, Mrs Piccanini, Gatooma (Ngezi).

² Mrs C. Goto, Wedza; Mrs J. Chirimuta, Mrewa (Mangwende); Mrs E. Mupazvirirwo, Marandellas (Svoswe); Mrs N. Chitekwe, Mtoko; Mrs S. Sakuringwa, Wedza (Zviyambe); Mrs N. Shekede, Marandellas (Chiota); Mrs L. Nhavira, Marandellas (Chiota).

gathered for a four-day locally arranged training course, a savings club meeting, a gathering of women's club leaders discussing the organization of a forthcoming show, women discussing the marketing of their craft works, a functional literacy project run by ALOR, a chicken-rearing group, an all-women farming group, and women working on a community project who were carrying stones for the building of a bridge.

We visited chiefs' homes where I met chiefs and their wives. We called in on a mission station where a flying doctor was visiting. I met active voluntary workers (all female), 'land rover demonstrators' (homecraft skills trainers) employed by the National Federation of Women's Institutes, Community Advisers and Agricultural Demonstrators doing their field work (all male), and in some cases the families of the Women Advisers.

I always met the DC first, with whom I discussed his views on 'women's work' in the district. In time, I got to know their personalities and how much support I could expect from them for my work. The Woman Adviser and I also sat down somewhere private and discussed her last monthly report. These were busy and instructive days indeed.

My Renault 6 learned to negotiate the rural roads. However, its windows were not dust-proof until I had this remedied. The first time I travelled with Mrs Chirimuta through Mangwende TTL, she had stepped into my car in an immaculately washed-and-ironed uniform and wearing a snow-white hand-knitted cardigan. As we drove over the sandy roads, dust billowed through the windows. I closed them. But when I looked at Mrs Chirimuta I saw that her black hair, her brown skin, her white jersey, and her green-and-white checked uniform were turning the same shade of grey as she was progressively covered in fine dust. I knew that the same was happening to me. Our nostrils started to dry out from the dust.



My Renault 6 learned to negotiate the rural roads

After our tour I dropped Mrs Chirimuta at her home, situated at the foot of a kopje about six kilometres from Mrewa on the old Salisbury-Mrewa road. She showed me around her home and yard: I remember the bream pond best.

Born in 1922, Jean Chirimuta was a self-confident woman, with a ready smile. She had borne seven children – first twins, a boy and a girl, followed by twins, a boy and a girl, followed by girl triplets. They were already 23, 19 and 15 years old when Mrs Chirimuta was appointed Women Adviser in 1970. Winifred Kaseke, one of the triplets, recounted in 2015:

Our brick-built, tin-roofed family home had three bedrooms, a lounge-dining room, a kitchen with a Dover stove and a large veranda. We had a telephone and a generator to provide light. There were several outbuildings and our home was surrounded by an orchard.

A feature that caused admiration far and wide was its pond, in which our mother bred bream for our table. We triplets had dug the pond. It was about two-and-a-half metres deep and lined with pummelled clay, so it did not leak. Mother planted buffalo grass around it, which made a thick lawn. The pond was fed only by rain water. It appeared black to the eye and you could not see to the bottom where the big fish hid, but when you took out some water it was very clear. Before our mother put the bream in we used to swim in the pond.

Our father's land was tilled by two hired workers under our parents' supervision. We also had a man helping around the home.



The question of 'how to dress appropriately' had given me something of a headache. I needed to manage my image in the eyes of the communities. Miniskirts and minidresses were all the vogue in Rhodesia at the time (we were always some years behind Europe in fashion), and I wore them with panache, feeling ever so 'swinging' after years of housewifery. Alas, they would not do in rural areas! Chief Chiota, for example, had not only banned women's skirts that did not cover the knees when sitting down, he had even banned shorts and bell-bottoms for young men. (Older men would never have worn them anyway.) I knew that slacks were out. Only prostitutes (in town) wore those. I would have felt so dowdy in a skirt covering the knees.

What to do? I invented the maxi skirt before its time and made myself

wide skirts covering my ankles! They were an instant success. One of the first chiefs I met at a public gathering pointed out to the assembled crowd how beautifully (read ‘decently’) I was dressed. For me, a wide maxi skirt proved eminently practical: I often had to sit on the ground among a gathering of women, so I could curl my legs up comfortably beneath its folds. Lo and behold – the maxi came into fashion for a while in general white society as the mini was being phased out.

Over time I gathered long necklaces made from the seeds of indigenous trees. When they saw that I liked and wore them, rural women often gave me one as a gift. As I collected more and more of them, I always saw to it that I did not wear more than twenty-one at a time. I loved how the colours of the various seeds harmonized with each other.



During that first tour, two needs were brought to my attention that interested me greatly. One was the need for adult literacy classes; the other was for civic affairs training. Women did not ask for the latter directly. Instead, I heard many complaints about ‘councils who do not support women’. A little probing brought to the fore what I had suspected: women had little idea how local government functioned and, consequently, how they could best bring their needs to their council’s attention and, if necessary, lobby. Wherever I asked them, women said they would love to have lessons on ‘how councils work’. These two needs, spontaneously articulated by women in the province, I would soon address with vigour.

Mrs Nhavira, Marandellas (Chiota TTL) was the last Women Adviser I visited on that first round. Tall and lean, Louisa Nhavira was born in 1931 and was appointed Women Adviser in 1970, having grown up in the same chief’s area in which she was later to marry and work. She had first qualified as a primary school teacher after completing Standard 6 and subsequently worked as a Domestic Science teacher.

Before applying to be trained as Women Adviser, she had been content in her work as a teacher and was



Women Advisers Mrs L. Nhavira (left)
and Mrs N. Shekede, Chiota TTL, Marandellas

Shona forms of address

Shona society uses very polite forms of address. A married woman with children is traditionally addressed in her community as Mai, followed by the name of her eldest child: Mai— [mother of —]. In the more modern setting, she is addressed as Mai, followed by her husband's surname: Mai— [Mrs —]. If she is divorced, she is usually addressed as 'Miss', followed by her father's surname, i.e. her maiden name. The same would apply if she was widowed but had not remained with her deceased husband's extended family and had returned to her father's or brother's home.

We wanted to show similar respect. In the Women's Section, when speaking English, we addressed all Women Advisers as 'Mrs —', using her husband's surname if she was married or her father's surname if she was divorced or widowed – never as 'Miss'. When speaking Shona, we addressed them as 'Mai—', also using her husband's or father's surname. We did the same with all the women voluntary workers we worked with. The administrators followed suit.

Among our colleagues and with most of our seniors in the ministry, male or female, we usually used first names, though everyone addressed the Senior Community Development Officer (Women) as 'Miss Wilson'.

in no hurry to marry until, in her own words, 'Dominic Jacob Nhavira swept me off my feet' at the age of twenty-five. He was a self-employed prospector – mostly for semi-precious stones such as aquamarine, but also for beryllium – and was away a great deal of the time. Unable to have children themselves, the Nhaviras adopted a baby girl and gave her their surname. Children of relatives also lived with the Nhaviras from time to time. She was a devoted member of the Methodist Church, though later changed to the United Apostolic Church of God, where her father had become a minister.

In Chiota, I saw, among other things, my first group of women's club members engaged in building themselves a club house, Kukumbirana Kwamadzimai. It had progressed well above window level. However, their project had not been without its setbacks, and it took almost two years to complete. The eighteen women involved had each moulded and burned 1,000 bricks. They had made extra bricks for the builder they had contracted as he was prepared to accept bricks in part-payment for the job. They had already collected \$27 for his pay. Then, at the annual election, the chairwoman changed. She unilaterally gave the job to her brother and paid him the \$27 as an advance. The club members, shocked and discouraged, abandoned the project and their chairwoman. After almost a year, and with the encouragement of the Women Adviser, they resumed it. The District Commissioner donated the door frames and window frames from his community development project fund. Mrs Nhavira had taken me to visit them to give them further encouragement.



The Kukumbirana Kwamadzimai clubhouse project, Chiota TTL, 1973

Mrs Nhavira also took me to admire ‘an individual project’. A very old bespectacled retired junior civil servant, dressed in dark trousers (held up by braces) and in a white shirt and tie, showed me with pride the truly magnificent toilet building that he had erected at his homestead, with separate cubicles for men and women, the respective entrances decorated with a stylized painting of a man and a woman, as well as a caption. All painted spick and span. He had his five-year-old grandson with him, whom he obviously adored. His grandson was the first rural child I met that was not utterly demure – he was quite forward, in fact, giving his opinion resolutely on everything he saw or heard. Here is a potential prime minister, I thought.

On that journey I swiftly learned never to make assumptions about motivation. A number of women in Chiota TTL expressed eagerness to build Blair toilets.³ They suggested community



The best loo in Chiota

³ Rhodesia was proud of its appropriate-technology ‘Blair toilet’, designed by the Blair Research Laboratory and promoted and subsidized throughout the TTLs. Although a ‘long-drop’, it is odourless – *if* the dimensions of its design are followed accurately – and flies are trapped in a ‘chimney’, cannot escape and dry up. On account of its spiral design, it does not need a door.

projects and asked for help with cement (which we advised that the Ministry of Health would give) 'so that everybody in this headman's area will have one'. Would we please encourage the men to agree? In my mind, I assumed that the teaching about environmental hygiene that the Health Assistants and Women Advisers were giving must have taken effect. But my research experience had taught me always, but always, to ask the question, 'Why?' 'No more bushes to hide behind,' they said. I saw their point: Chiota TTL is very flat, sandy, and had at that stage already been rather denuded of trees and shrubs.



In each district station I visited, I noticed that DCs and district officers actively disliked Miss Wilson. They never failed to make a disparaging or even hostile remark. I defended her fiercely. Any attack on her was an attack on our Section, on our work, on our ethos. I unreservedly admired the work she had done, the kind of women she had selected and trained as Women Advisers, their achievements. I respected and liked her and would therefore simply not allow such remarks. In time the officers stopped making them. It was only some years later that one DC told me how Wyn Wilson had upset everybody (read 'all the male officers') at the station where he was a junior officer with her (in his view) 'bulldozing' and 'man-hating' manner. He added:

You and I, well ... it took us some years to understand each other. I don't think the policy and aims of your Section were ever properly explained at the beginning. But also, since we had grown to dislike your boss, and you shut us up when we made negative remarks about her, we mentally pigeon-holed you in the same 'impossible woman' compartment.



During some of these first field visits I also had to interview applicants for the initial training course for Home Economics Demonstrators (HEDs) and thus had to familiarize myself with their role. Women's clubs had initially been well served with training in homecraft skills by the national organizations they were affiliated to. They employed full-time and part-time trainers who travelled into the field and built up a network of local club members who passed on their skills on a voluntary basis. However, as women's clubs mushroomed, a shortage of trainers developed.

With the training of HEDs, the Women's Section addressed the need

for more homecraft-skills trainers for women's clubs. Like the 'area trainers' that had been developed by the women's club umbrella organizations for some years, they were to be voluntary workers. The women's clubs in the area that was allocated a place on the course elected two or three women that they would like to be trained. They also had to raise funds for the course fee. This fee was heavily subsidized, but it was an important part of the tripartite commitment. The woman who was to be trained knew that her fellow club members had raised money for her course and her bus fare. In return, she committed herself to teaching them what she had learned on the course, on a voluntary basis. We committed ourselves to giving the HED further training free of charge after she had proved herself in the field.

It fell to the PCDOW to make the final selection of candidates. Usually we accepted the club members' first choice, but I had to check that she had the requisite educational background to profit from the course. Sometimes I also had to exclude a woman who had already had the opportunity to attend other training courses provided by women's organizations but had kept the knowledge gained to herself. Being trained carried prestige, and the occasional recipient was not willing to dilute this by passing on her knowledge to others.



In between field visits, I studied the 'provincial team' and I realized, eventually, that its development efforts were seldom co-ordinated: we were a bunch of individuals who liked to do 'our own thing'. But, of course, our work interlinked, and I made sure that I knew the field staff of other sections at district level.

The Provincial Commissioner was assisted by a District Commissioner seconded to Province and by a Security Officer. My colleagues with a development role were: the Provincial Agricultural Officer, a Provincial Co-operatives Development Officer, a Provincial Officer for Young Farmers Clubs, and a Provincial Officer for Community Development and Local Government who supported Community Advisers but mainly organized training for councillors. All were men.

In time, I learned that, apart from having its own specialization, each section had a very different structure. DEVAG, the Department of Agricultural Development, had a very tall one, with Agricultural Demonstrators (now called Extension Assistants) at the bottom of the scale, supervised at district level by Agricultural Officers of several grades. There was thus a ladder of promotion opportunities in this department,

and the Provincial Agricultural Officer was a very senior officer within the Internal Affairs system, second in rank only to the Provincial Commissioner. Accordingly, he had the biggest office (apart from the PC's), the widest desk, a carpet and easy chairs. We others did not have such tall structures, nor such large desks, and most of us supervised fieldworkers at district level. Indeed, the Provincial Co-operatives Development Officer, having no field staff, dealt with co-operatives directly. (I was to be on the receiving end of the Provincial Agricultural Officer's power a few years later.)

There was a registry, run by the switchboard operator and a registry clerk, but for reasons that I never questioned in my ignorance, my correspondence and reports were never integrated into the provincial registry and my mail was never opened. Setting up and maintaining my own filing system in my own office gave me much tedious work over the years, but today I see it as a blessing. Had my correspondence, reports and training materials been integrated, none of my files would have survived the pre-independence destruction of most provincial records.



A system of dual lines of control operated in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thus I reported to Miss Wilson 'in respect of professional matters' but was 'on the staff of the Provincial Commissioner' and reported to him 'for day-to-day activities'. Similarly, the Women Advisers reported to me 'in respect of professional matters' and to the DC 'for day-to-day activities'.

The same system of dual control applied to other sections of Internal Affairs. Some Agricultural Officers and Demonstrators chafed under this arrangement. So did some of us in the Women's Section, especially if the DC was very autocratic or chauvinistic. In respect of agriculture, what were deemed 'professional matters' was clearer, though. After all, the administrators had had no formal agricultural training; most had had little training in community development theory and practice either, and none in the social sciences. But what is 'professional' about 'women's work'? The latter was indeed an unfortunate term used for our Section's vocation. Regrettably, Wyn Wilson continued to use it.

On the other hand, I could see that the DC needed control over his varied district team in order to achieve an integrated approach to administration and development. The system of dual control worked fairly well – most of the time – for the Women's Section, partly because Women Advisers were totally committed to its objectives, ethos and methods, and partly because most of the exclusively male DCs – and most of their almost exclusively male staff, almost all of them chauvinists – were not

really very interested in rural women. Most regarded our Section's officer and field staff as the 'cakes and doily brigade' and so largely left us alone. In other words, they neglected the Women Advisers. There was Deputy Secretary Noel Hunt, who used to introduce me at official functions for senior Internal Affairs staff in this way: '... and this is Mrs Chenaux-Repond; she teaches tribal women to make cheese soufflés in kaffir pots – no wonder their husbands beat them'.

I must, however, also state that Women Advisers (and later Development Workers) all found the monthly field-staff meetings under the chairmanship of the DC or his representative to be very useful – indeed, imperative. That is where they were informed about what other field staff were doing in the district and could co-ordinate their activities, and invite the Agricultural Demonstrator or Health Assistant, for example, to the courses or functions that they organized. They appreciated the opportunity to 'share ideas'.

Thus the system of dual lines of control worked fairly well, in spite of the fact that the non-directive approach of our Section came into direct conflict with the directive approach of some DCs from the beginning – more so during the war, as Internal Affairs increasingly assumed paramilitary functions.

I was indeed fortunate to have Bob Woollacott as my Provincial Commissioner. He thoroughly understood and supported the aims and methods of community development and supported 'women's work'. And he genuinely liked women. He was happily married with an only daughter whom he adored and of whom he was very proud.

Reg Pryce, the Co-operatives Officer, was the first to become overtly friendly and we had many good discussions. I was genuinely interested in the co-operative movement, though I did not have much opportunity to become acquainted with it in the field. Otherwise, I felt that most provincial colleagues were rather reserved towards me for some time. I shrugged it off. 'I am in an all-male environment, what can you expect? I'll do my own thing. An incredible challenge lies before me! I won't let the male officers bother me much.'



What did a Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) actually do? On return from my familiarization tour, I took time to reflect on my role. In late 1974, while preparing the Provincial Policy for Mashonaland South, I paraphrased two sections from the Prime Minister's Directive,⁴

⁴ Rhodesia. *Statement of Policy and Directive by the Prime Minister.*

substituting the word 'women' for the term 'people':

Community Development is not a plan or programme prepared by any Ministry to be imposed on [women]: it is a process stimulated from outside, but essentially operated by the [women] themselves which leads to their own plans and programmes within the law.

[It is our role] to assist [women] to acquire the attitudes, knowledge, skills and resources required to solve through communal self-help and organization, as wide a range of local problems as possible, in their own order of priority.

In time, I developed my own detailed job description from the rudimentary one I had been given by the Senior Community Development Officer (Women). This was necessary not only for my own clarification and focus but in order to assert myself against the persistent misconception that I was the provincial women's clubs organizer.

My job comprised four line functions:

- *Support and supervision* of field staff
- *Training*
- *Liaison* with other agencies active in the development field with a view to co-ordinating and integrating programmes
- *Special assignments* by the ministry

and two supportive functions: writing reports, plus, alas, the host of administrative matters associated with my main tasks.

In my boundless enthusiasm I attempted to add 'action research' to my portfolio, and I tried to keep up with developments in the field of community development in other countries in theory and practice – two endeavours that none of my superiors actually expected of me, or supported. The pressures on my time soon became such that these self-imposed aspects of my role were never successfully implemented. Support of field staff and training took up the bulk of my time. I loved both.

When I started work in 1973 I had fourteen Women Advisers to supervise. During the following years, six more were added to the staff in the province, plus twenty-one Development Workers (three of whom were also trained Adult Literacy Teachers), and one Women Adviser was assigned to a township; informally, we called her 'Township Worker'.

My work area was vast. Potentially, it comprised all the Tribal Trust Lands and African Purchase Areas in the province of Mashonaland South – an area the size of 42,711 km² including Salisbury District – the size of Switzerland. The TTLs and APAs took up only about half of the total area, but I still had to travel through European areas too: they merely added to the distance I had to travel. The TTLs and APAs had a population

of 440,000,⁵ of whom roughly 113,000 were adult women – my target population. The distance between the two Women Advisers stationed farthest apart was 450 kilometres, about half of it not on the best of roads. Luckily my Renault 6 thought she was a Land-Rover. Housebound before, I loved the adventure of all this travelling and discovery.

In time, I became responsible for the two-week annual refresher courses for the Women Advisers and Development Workers in the province, the four-week initial training and two-week refresher courses for HEDs (classified as ‘national’ courses), and for the provincial courses for the wives of chiefs. On my own initiative, I designed and carried out pre-school teachers’ courses and other provincial training in response to needs expressed by women. In addition, I initiated training programmes to be carried out by other agencies, notably ‘Local Government Awareness’ training.

⁵ About 60 per cent of the population was below nineteen years of age. After the age of twenty, significant numbers of young men left the rural areas to seek wage employment in towns. Thus two thirds of the remaining adults were women.



In order to avoid overlaps and gaps, the Women's Section liaised with voluntary organizations that were active in the development field and were targeting women. There were not many of them. International NGOs and aid organizations made an appearance in the country only after independence.

There were umbrella organizations for women's clubs to which individual clubs could affiliate: the Federation of African Women's Clubs (FAWC), the National Federation of Women's Institutes of Rhodesia, the CWC, homecraft clubs associated with particular missions, and the Women's Group Liaison (WGL) committee, in which these umbrella organizations could discuss matters of mutual concern.

There were more specialist organizations – such as the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), whose aims were much wider than homecraft, ALOR, the Savings Club Development Movement, and the Red Cross Society of Rhodesia, which targeted both men and women. We also worked with the Rhodesian YFC movement (Young Farmers Clubs, later Youth For Conservation) that targeted teenage girls and boys, and later the Playgroup Association of Rhodesia that targeted pre-school children and their mothers.

Although there were some tensions between government agencies and voluntary organizations, they and the Women's Section worked well together, on the whole, and complemented each other's services.

I had close connections with ALOR, of course, as I had been involved in its forerunner, the Adult Literacy Campaign, and in the organization's formation; I continued to be a member, participating in its members' meetings. Wherever a need for literacy classes arose, I put women's group leaders and councils in touch with ALOR.

I was soon invited to serve on the WGL committee, who produced the *Homecraft Magazine* for African women's clubs, regardless of their affiliation, and then on the magazine's editorial committee. I provided articles for the magazine on such topics as 'The Work of a Women Adviser' and 'A Visit to the Salisbury Show' (written by two HEDs in training),¹ and on a visit by wives of chiefs to Salisbury airport.

I solicited articles from fellow Community Development officers. Arlene

¹ See pages 54 and 55.

Fullard supplied some from Matabeleland in Ndebele. I administered questionnaires in the field to provide feedback from the readership and presented a simple income-and-expenditure statement to women's gatherings who had said that the magazine was 'expensive'. This presentation showed the readers how heavily subsidized the magazine was, and convinced them that they got a bargain in return for their modest subscription.

Everything I became involved in provided a learning experience and thus was exciting for me. As a member of the editorial committee of the *Homecraft Magazine*, which, apart from me, was comprised entirely of volunteers, I gathered insights into the production and financing of a publication.

Some learning experiences were amusing. Soon a request came in for a sewing pattern for a bra. No commercial patterns being available (owing to sanctions), I dismantled one of my own bras. Rolf, always supportive when it came to doing practical things, expertly made technical drawings of the pieces, allowing for seams. I wrote the sewing instructions, and the pattern was duly printed and distributed.



Together with representatives of the CWC, I held two problem-solving sessions to undo competitive tensions that had developed – one in Ngezi TTL between clubs associated with the CWC and the FAWC, the other between CWC leaders and a Women Adviser elsewhere. When the local club leaders could see that the head office representatives of their clubs and I, as the provincial head of the Women's Section, worked well together – and could see that we were working jointly to uplift women – their local rivalries usually subsided.

We cleared up similar misunderstandings about the role and 'neutrality' of Women Advisers. I saw to it that the work of the HEDs that we were training supported and complemented the work of the area leaders and the skills trainers that the women's organizations were training, and that no competitive jealousies arose between them.

Later on, the Playgroup Association would help me with the training of pre-school 'teachers', and – as the war progressed and representatives of women's club organizations no longer travelled into the field – WGL offered courses for women that I selected from sensitive areas. The Red Cross Society trained women to staff first-aid posts in Protected Villages, while I did the selection interviews for their courses.



The various women's club umbrella organizations did sterling work among rural women. This I fully acknowledged, although personally I thought some of the individuals in it to be rather 'paternalistic' or a bit 'fuddy-duddy' – young and exuberant as I was. While the organizations employed African field staff and trainers, almost all the national leaders of these organizations were white middle-class women. They gave unstintingly of their time as voluntary workers.²

To mention two outstanding examples: Mrs Ruth Tucker worked full-time for eighteen years in an honorary capacity as the director of the Red Cross Society, at the same time bringing up four children. Her husband, a chartered accountant, gave her his full support. Miss Alice Sanderson, who built up ALOR, never drew a salary but used her own funds to support herself. Others who held elected positions worked many hours a week for their causes.³

All these white women I knew also tried in their own way to improve race relations. Never did I hear any of them use a derogatory term, despite some of them being subtly condescending. There was the odd sour one among them, but those were the exceptions. One of them once said to me in respect of my work, 'They will never be grateful to you, you know!'

'Grateful?' I thought, startled. I was looking for self-actualization, not gratitude.

I found my work fascinating, my whole being expanding through it. Sometimes, when my payslip arrived, I thought: 'Wow, and I even get paid for doing this!'

Voluntary work was as firmly established in the TTLs and APAs as it was among urban white women and among the wives of administrators on district stations. The FAWC had their area trainers, our Section trained HEDs: all were voluntary workers. The area trainers served mainly the homecraft clubs affiliated to the FAWC; the HEDs could be asked to teach any group of women. Red Cross trainees gave valuable lessons in health care and first aid. The WGL trained judges who were competent to judge entries at women's club shows, and did so in a voluntary capacity.

All this unpaid work contributed significantly to the progress of rural women.

² An exception was Helen Mangwende, the deceased wife of the former Chief Mangwende, who first formed a number of women's clubs in Mangwende TTL and was instrumental in founding the FAWC in 1953.

³ Voluntary work was also firmly established in the Indian and Coloured communities, but I never had the privilege of working with any of those women.

By invitation, I attended shows. During my first year I was invited to Soswe (Marandellas District), where I presented the first prizes in the homecraft section, to Uzumba (Mrewa), Sanyati (Gatooma), to area shows in Chief Mashayamombe's and Chief Nenguwo's areas of Mondoro (Hartley), and to Ngezi (Gatooma), where I attended as a guest, but was usually roped in to give a speech or to help in some other way.

The agricultural shows were big events in the rural calendar. Farmers competed with each other in various sections: 'best maize-grower', 'best cotton-grower', 'best chicken-rearer', 'best pen-fattener', 'best ox on show', 'best home-made farm implement', even 'best conservationist'; groups competed in the category 'best [area] grazing scheme'. Fertilizer and maize-seed firms, among others, donated prizes. Some of these were substantial – a plough, for example. Agricultural officers and representatives of fertilizer firms did the judging, certificates were awarded for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize and 'highly commended'. Prizes were presented by the DC or by other VIPs. There were area shows and then district shows, to which the prize-winners of area shows went forward.

Most agricultural shows also had a homecraft section in which members of women's clubs competed with articles they had sewn, knitted, crocheted, embroidered, cooked or baked; and with craft work fashioned from sisal or reeds and with home-fired clay pots. But in many cases the women still preferred to have their separate women's clubs' area and district shows. It gave them more say in organizational matters.

An agricultural show committee was usually made up exclusively of men; the 'women's section' had its own committee, made up of women's club members. The Women Advisers' role was to advise on organizational matters, if needed, and to encourage club members to improve their skills during the months leading up to the show. They would also help to find trainers to give homecraft lessons and training in how to make the show articles that usually were decided on for the whole district.



The joy of being awarded a certificate!

The judging of various sections was initially done by wives of administrators and white representatives of women's club organizations. As shows mushroomed – and later, as the war proceeded and townsfolk no longer travelled to rural areas – the women's organizations provided courses to train local women as judges. They could never judge in their home areas, though, for fear of bias, and so travel costs were involved for the show committees. (White women always bore their own costs.)

Firms like David Whitehead Textiles, the most prominent textile firm in the country, Gold Star Sugar, Karina Wool or Kango Enamelware provided some prizes. To purchase other prizes, the clubs had to collect money from their members, and they usually bought enamelled pots or dishes of various sizes.

There was always a group of women detailed to do the cooking, for people flocked to the combined agricultural and women's club shows from far and wide and needed to be fed. Often a beast was bought locally and slaughtered; sometimes a well-to-do local businessman donated one. School choirs came to provide entertainment and children gave gymnastic and acrobatic displays.

I discovered that prizes in the farming section were invariably won by men – even if the wife or wives had done most or all of the work in the fields. The husband owned the land, after all, and was the head of household and decision-maker. The wife or wives usually ululated, called out his praise names, danced around him and carried the prize high in the air to where their husband would later be sitting – among the men. In absurd cases, when the husband was actually working in town and a prize had been won entirely through his wife's labour, he took leave, donned a suit to show that he was employed, and arrived by bus to collect 'his' prize.

My colleague Dorianne had a story to tell here: In one of her work areas the same farmer won 'best all-round farmer' and best this or that year after year and proudly collected the prizes in his name, 'as it should be'. Then one year he got nowhere, did not even win a consolation prize – an 'encouragement prize' as the women called it in their own sections. What had happened? Dorianne soon found out. The 'farmer' had two wives, who were sisters, and they did all the farming. Then he married a third, much younger woman without consulting his two wives, much to their disgust. So they declared that since he had married the third wife without even consulting them, he and this newcomer could from now on do the farming on his field on their own.

A polygamist traditionally had to allocate each wife a field on which she could grow crops for herself and her children. He also had his own

Cephas Msipa

David Whitehead Textiles sometimes sponsored an entire entry section for which specified fabric of theirs had to be used, and the firm donated generous prizes of material. I had a very friendly relationship and many an interesting discussion with a David Whitehead public relations officer, Cephas Msipa, whom I met at many a women's club show. He genuinely liked 'working with mothers', as he put it, and this was evident in his interactions with them. Within the firm he had also been responsible for the employment of young women as pattern demonstrators, a job which also often took him to the TTLs.

Cephas Msipa was as interested in my work as I was in his political views, which he discussed freely when we had time between actual engagements in the business of the shows. I doubt, however, that I realized at the time the extent of his involvement in nationalist politics. A former headmaster of several urban primary schools and President of the Rhodesia Teachers' Association, in 1971 co-founded the African National Council, from which he resigned in 1972 in favour of full-time employment, though he remained active in politics.

It is typical of his modesty that he never mentioned to me that he had been detained in Gwelo and Fort Victoria prisons and in Gonakudzingwa Detention Camp between 1965 and 1970 – where, incidentally, he studied for a degree in Administration by correspondence through the University of South Africa (UNISA).

I later lost contact with him for some two years, but bumped into him again early in 1977, in town. Both of us standing on the pavement, he told me about his participation in the abortive Geneva conference. When I met him again at Domboshawa in 1981, quite by chance – I had not even been aware that he was to make an official visit – he was Deputy Minister of Manpower Planning and Development.

He stepped out of his entourage of officials when he saw me to enquire in detail about the work I was now doing. Cephas Msipa left politics sometime later, stating that politics was not really 'his line', but re-appeared as Governor of the Midlands province.

His memoir, *In Pursuit of Freedom and Justice*, was published in Harare by Weaver Press in 2015, and he died on 17 October 2016.



Cephas Msipa represents David Whitehead
at a women's club show

fields on which all wives were supposed to work jointly. These crops were under his control and cash crops were often grown on these fields. However, his first two wives had simply gone on strike on the husband's fields and grew food on their own fields only, to feed their own children.



During the second part of August and into September 1973, I conducted my first Home Economics Demonstrators' initial training course for Mashonaland South.

The initial HEDs' courses were standardized in all provinces. They were of four weeks' duration and the following subjects were included: nutrition (the three groups of food – proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins – and protein-rich porridge for babies after weaning); water-borne diseases; sewing (a cover for the back-rest of a straight wooden chair usually found in a homestead, a shirt) and pattern-cutting; following a knitting pattern and following a crocheting pattern; cookery; how to build a Dutch oven; fertility trenches for growing vegetables; the role of the Women Adviser; the role of the HED; Young Farmers' Clubs for youngsters; how to give a talk; how to give a demonstration; books to use in women's clubs; planning a project; community development; and family planning.

Naturally, I did not have to teach all these subjects, but for this first course I stayed with the trainees for most of their sessions. I wanted to know 'how the course worked' and to establish personal relationships on which to base our future co-operation in the field.

The lessons on reading knitting and crochet patterns I found rather unsatisfactory. Women, generally, were not accustomed to reading much or to following written instructions, but they were very skilled at copying an item or at learning to make it simply by being told or shown how. The same applied to following cookery recipes.

I concerned myself mostly with the trainees' own lessons and demonstrations. To practise teaching methods, and to help memorize factual content, each trainee had to give a lesson on a topic of her choice to her fellow trainees, and had to make a simple lesson plan. Each demonstration and talk was evaluated and constructive feedback was given.

During this and my other longer courses, I invariably discovered that a few of the participants had poor eyesight. I arranged for them to have their eyes tested. Glasses were expensive, so I collected second-hand spectacle frames to help with the costs. In those days, the frames – because they were imported under sanctions – were far more expensive than the lenses, which were locally ground. My mother sent me many a care parcel with

spectacle frames she had collected. Once she got a donation of over fifty frames from an optician in Riehen (where she lived) because a particular style had apparently gone out of fashion.

We always included a 'look-and-learn' outing in our courses. This particular year I took the HEDs in training to the Salisbury Agricultural Show, which over the years had grown into an industrial show and also incorporated stands at which government departments and voluntary organizations explained their work. Anticipating that this huge event could be bewildering for rural women confronted with it for the first time, I carefully planned what they were going to see. Fun was included.

We had our packed lunch at the arena, where a show-jumping event and dog-obedience demonstrations greatly entertained them. We visited the livestock section, of course. Some of the cattle created much amazement, particularly the dairy cows with their large udders. And the Brahmins: some of the participants simply did not believe that Brahmins were cattle and not some species of wild animal!

I noted my charges' surprise when they saw the queues of African visitors at the entrance gates. It transpired that some of them had assumed that Africans were not allowed to attend a 'European show' and had wondered how I proposed to get them in. They were even more intrigued to see that Africans could also compete in the Salisbury Show, though mostly still in separate sections. Two participants, Mrs Manyengawana and Mrs Nyamande, wrote reports on this outing – short, of course, because nobody liked writing very much – that were published in the *Homecraft Magazine* and are reproduced on the next pages. The first was written in English, the second has been translated from Shona.

Once trained, the HED was officially introduced by the Women Adviser to the chief and the headmen, and their wives, and to the homecraft clubs in the area in which she was to work, and her role was once again explained.



Chiefs held an important judicial and spiritual role in the TTLs, where people still lived along traditional lines under the authority of chiefs, headmen and kraal heads, though overseen in their political role by the DC as the government's representative. Accordingly, their wives – and particularly the first wife, *vahosi* – were also still very influential, particularly in relation to women. While some did participate in women's clubs, many of these female elders were reported to be against clubs and against women going to courses at Domboshawa – 'where they would meet men' – telling women that their proper place was in the home and in their husband's

fields. As a result, some women did not dare to join clubs, nor dare to go on a course, and many husbands did not allow them to, having the chief's wife's backing for their own controlling outlook.

We wanted the wives of chiefs to develop a more positive attitude. Having been to Domboshawa carried enormous prestige. We thought the chiefs' wives' disapproving stance had much to do with so many of them being illiterate and with few of them ever having been to a course at the National Training Centre themselves. Perhaps they were a bit jealous or felt threatened.

In order to tailor my first course to the chiefs' wives' felt needs, I visited the homes of all the chiefs in Mashonaland to invite one of their wives personally to the course (through the chief, of course) and to establish what they would like to learn. My visits yielded two surprises: one about my own attitudes, the other about some of the things that chiefs' wives wanted to learn. I was a sociologist – utterly steeped in the notion of 'different societies, different values and mores', all to be explored without judgement based on our own values. I was totally open-minded and

My First Visit to the Salisbury Show

Mrs P. Manyengawana

Area Secretary, Chenai Moyo Club (FAWC), Mtoko TTL

It was on the 28th of August when we visited the show of Salisbury for my first time. This was arranged by Mrs Chenaux-Repond and we were taken by the Express Motorways bus. It was a wonderful journey in that comfortable bus.

Since it was my first time, everything was strange to me that I could not know what was going on. As we were directed in everything by Mrs Chenaux, I began to know actually how this show was arranged. We began to see the European embroidery articles and baked cakes, scones and meat pies. Also on the other side were the African articles. They were so wonderful that I could not believe that African women can do such things.

As we moved on we came to a place called African Village. There I learned about so many things made by hand. We also saw the Inter-ICA [Intensive Conservation Area] Competition in which African Purchase Areas take part. I was happy because Mtoko Mutambwe farmers won 2nd prize of which I was very proud because I am from Mtoko.

So many interesting games were done. We went to see jumping horses. It was my first time to see horses jumping. We also went on to see sheep, and goats. In all my life I had never seen such sheep. That surprised me very much. Cattle were of different kinds. Some came from overseas, and everybody was surprised to see such cattle.

This was a great day for me and I will never forget it in all my life.

without prejudice. Well, not quite, I found out.

About two thirds of the chiefs were polygamists. The first such homes I visited were built, from traditional materials, on the traditional pattern, each wife having her own kitchen hut and her own sleeping hut, where she slept with her youngest children. If the chief was at home, a visitor was entertained in his own quarters by him and his senior wife, the *vahosi*. After business was concluded, the lesser wives were called in and introduced to me by the *vahosi*. They were briefed on what had transpired according to the *vahosi*'s judgement of what the younger wives needed to know. Protocol was the same if the chief was not at home, but I was then entertained in the *vahosi*'s house.

Our Journey to the Salisbury Show

Mrs O. Nyamande

Area Secretary, Kushingirira Club, Chiota TTL

We left Domboshawa at 9.15 in the morning and arrived at the Salisbury Show at 9.45. We were taken there by a bus called Express Motorways. It was the best bus I have ever seen.

We spent a very good day being shown many different things that pleased us very much, but while we were on our way we thought that our leader, Mrs Chenaux-Repond, the Provincial Officer of Mashonaland South, had arranged a useless trip for us. Then, once we were at the show, we began to see that this was going to be a very big day in our lives.

The women's homecraft work and the woodwork of the children of Morgan High School pleased me very much. The standard of the women's work on display opened our minds to what can be achieved and will give us the motivation to learn more skills. We will try our best to reach their standard.

We were also shown pictures and films on how to rear animals and how to fatten them, and also on crops which had been grown correctly. So it was very good farm produce. Those who did well were given very nice prizes.

We felt great pity for the children of Jairos Jiri,¹ who could sing so well, and some could even dance. We never thought that disabled children could learn to do this. We learned that if mothers would send their disabled children to Jairos Jiri early enough the organization could help them.

We all gave thanks to Mrs Chenaux-Repond for what she arranged for us. We even saw an elephant, which none of us had ever seen before. We thanked her for everything we are learning at the month's Home Economics Course. May she continue in the same spirit, so that we women have the opportunity to learn and to progress.

¹ Jairos Jiri is the name of a welfare organization, named for the founder, that provided schooling and medical care for physically handicapped children.

I was perfectly comfortable with polygamy in this traditional setting. But then I visited Chief Mangwende's home. He was a very powerful chief, relatively young, prominent in the Council of Chiefs and later a Senator. He had built himself a modern 'suburban' house. The lounge was furnished with a settee and easy chairs covered in red plush. The bedrooms all led off the lounge: a bedroom for Wife One, a bedroom for Wife Two, and a bedroom for Wife Three. I felt distinctly uncomfortable – the house felt to me like a brothel. So much for being a value-free sociologist!

But back to the course: The *vahosi* in the traditional homestead I had visited first was quite elderly and illiterate and had never attended a course of any description before. She told me that what she really wanted to learn was how to make a wedding cake – a real, three-tiered wedding cake, iced in white and decorated with icing flowers and little plaster of Paris figures of bride and groom on top!

I could not believe my ears, and I hope I did not sound too astounded. It was about the last thing, I thought, that elderly wives of chiefs needed. I myself regarded the wedding cake as one of the sillier things that the British empire had invented. But the *vahosi* was not alone. The same wish was expressed by quite a number of her peers. 'Our children now work in town,' they said, 'so they want white weddings, with the bride in a white wedding dress and with many bridesmaids, all dressed up. And the bride wants a wedding cake, you see. These are very expensive and difficult to transport from town. So it would be good if we learned to make them!' Apart from that, they had few ideas about what they would like to learn – indeed, what one *could* learn.

So, 'making a wedding cake' duly featured prominently on the course programme, together with subjects that the Women Advisers and I thought would be useful, such as 'the role of a chief's wife in the community today', 'the role of the Women Adviser', 'how families benefit from homecraft clubs', 'nutrition' and 'family planning'. Not that the chiefs' first wives still needed family planning themselves, but, like many older people – and far too many men – they believed that contraceptives made wives promiscuous. We wanted to dispel that myth and discuss the benefits of planning one's family and spacing one's children.

To return to 'making a wedding cake': the head of the African Marketing Department of the Rhodesia Milling Company was duly visited.⁴ I discussed in detail what was wanted with her:

⁴ In those days, many commercial firms had mobile training units. While their chief purpose was, of course, to persuade people to buy their products, they actually had a useful role in communities where skills trainers were rare. The mobile training unit of David Whitehead, for example, gave very useful lessons in pattern-cutting and sewing. Karina Wool gave lessons on knitting, crocheting and pattern-reading. The same firms also donated prizes for women's clubs' shows.

- A round fruit cake to be made on the spot
- Another to be brought, already baked
- A demonstration of how to ice a cake
- A demonstration of how to make very simple flowers from icing
- Some practice in how to make these flowers
- A demonstration of how to assemble a two-tier wedding cake
- Plaster of Paris figures of a bride and groom to be placed on top.

The great day came. To my chagrin I was called to head office and could not be present when the demonstration took place. I rushed out to Domboshawa as soon as I could. I found my charges sitting around the demonstration van utterly mute and looking glum. I found out that the demonstrator, a self-opinionated black woman, had told the wives of chiefs that this lesson was the stupid idea of an ignorant white woman who had no idea of rural life. They would never be able to afford a real wedding cake, anyway, let alone be capable of making one. She had therefore demonstrated how to make a simple granadilla sponge cake that they would be able to make, if necessary, in a three-legged pot!

I was furious, but it was too late to save the situation. The disappointment about the wedding cake featured much in the course evaluation. I promised to invite the women for a refresher course, during which they would, indeed, learn to make one. The demonstrator who had so humiliated them would never be invited again!

And so it was that 'making a wedding cake' featured very prominently in a short refresher course that I was able to arrange a few months later. The Rhodesia Milling Company made good their reputation – which I had assured them had been ruined throughout Mashonaland by their haughty demonstrator – by donating an enormous, genuine fruit cake for us to eat (a true 'sanctions buster', since dried fruit, not produced in the country, was not available in Rhodesian shops) and their representative demonstrated how to make a smaller one for us to ice. A Gold Star Sugar representative came to teach icing.

Small tables and chairs were arranged around the demonstration van. Chiefs' wives practised making little icing flowers *ad nauseam*. For almost two whole days! Their gnarled hands found it very difficult to control the piping bags. There was discarded icing on the ground all over the place that soon attracted thousands of tiny sugar ants. But the cake was duly iced and decorated in the end. Afterwards it stood on an exhibition table in the dining hall for an evening and a full day, and was duly admired by all. We finally cut it up and ate it – together with the bigger cake – with plenty of well-sugared, milky tea.

Each participant was given a few perfect icing flowers, made beforehand by the Gold Star Sugar demonstrator, to take home. A stroke of genius on her part, which caused much joy. In the end, the chiefs' wives themselves decided that making a wedding cake in a rural home involved simply too much effort and that the bridegrooms would have to buy them in town. They were deeply satisfied by their experience, however. Most of them from now on encouraged young wives to join homecraft clubs.



The wedding cake (chiefs' wives on the right)



Mrs Otilia Nyamande was one of the 1973 HED trainees whom I was to meet again and again over many years. Indeed, she has kept in contact with me to this day, phoning or visiting me perhaps once a year. She is an amazing woman and her story deserves telling.

The Nyamandes had two children at the time I trained her to work in the Mudzimurema area of Chiota TTL with Women Adviser Shekede. She was expecting her third son then, and later also had two daughters. Happily married, she was the resolute, extrovert partner in the marriage. In contrast, her husband was a shy man but a devoted spouse and father. He worked in town, as a machinist in a clothing factory, while his wife farmed his land. Both had completed only primary education, but were determined that their children, including the girls, would go as far as they were able. As the children grew older, they went to live with their father in town to have better access to secondary education. They managed their father's household and 'he never went out drinking in the evenings', as they all testify.

As a Home Economics Demonstrator, Mrs Nyamande did much voluntary work among the women's clubs and, with her husband's consent, took part in all the agricultural extension lessons in order to achieve better yields. She yearned for further formal education but postponed her desire so that such money as the couple were earning could go to their children's school fees.

I met her again after independence, at Alvord Training Centre near Masvingo, while assessing the training of local-government promotion officers (I was a training officer in the Branch of Community Development Training by then). She was attending a six months' course leading to a certificate in community work. She was distraught, as she felt that she could not 'keep up' with the course and would surely fail the examinations. I looked at the written course material and was horrified. Some of my fellow training officers, all young black university graduates, had no idea how to write training material in simple English. It was not just a matter of vocabulary: it was also a matter of sentence construction.

I asked Mrs Nyamande to write out all the English words that she did not understand in one of the course handouts; the list was very long. There were no suitable English-Shona dictionaries at the time. The *Standard Shona Dictionary* – a 'magnum opus' of 1014 pages,⁵ had only a limited English-Shona section and was pricy. I explained the meaning of the words she had written out. Then I asked her to ask the trainer from now on, while she was in class, to translate into Shona any word that she did not understand. Mrs Nyamande expressed trepidation. 'Will it not annoy the trainer?' 'Will I not fail the exams if I show myself to be so ignorant?' 'Will others not laugh at me?' I assured her that, for every word she asked the meaning of, others would be grateful, because it was likely that they did not understand it either. Somebody had to be brave enough to do this!

I discussed the matter later at a staff conference of training officers and with my boss. The training material was, in time, thoroughly revised. However, plucky Mrs Nyamande did ask for explanations in class and, I learned later, passed the examinations. The certificate she earned stood her in good stead when she eventually applied for employment. In the meantime, what she had learned helped her in her voluntary work.

During 1983, I received a letter from her. She told me that a job had been advertised by Karanda Mission, in Mount Darwin District, for a

⁵ M Hannan, *Standard Shona Dictionary* (Harare: College Press in conjunction with the Literature Bureau, rev. edn. with addendum, 1984 [first published 1959]).

woman to take charge of their Nutrition Village'.⁶ She longed to apply, but did not have the confidence to do so. I arranged to meet her in town and encouraged her to try. She needed reassurance that applying for a job and not getting it was not a disgrace. However, she did obtain the position and managed the Nutrition Village for many years. With her pay complementing her husband's, the Nyamandes could employ labour to till the husband's fields. The husband, from now on, went home most weekends to provide the management input.

I visited Mrs Nyamande at Karanda Mission in 1984. She had her daughter, Ruth, aged five, living with her, and her second son, Clever, was spending his holidays there, as the others often did. I felt for Clever because, although aged only thirteen, he was suffering from migraines.

In the meantime, Mrs Nyamande had studied for and passed Form I, Form II, and the National Certificate in Education by correspondence, and had started studying for her O levels,⁷ but she was struggling with English and had failed a number of tests. 'How come we can speak English and then fail our English exams?' she asked me. I explained the difference between spoken English, where one would be understood even if one's sentences contained grammatical errors and one's vocabulary was not always correct, and the standard of written English required for O-level or A-level examinations. The answer to the problem was reading, reading, reading. Well aware that correspondence students could not usually afford books, and that there were actually not that many suitable books available anyway, I collected and sent her reading material.

After studying for several years, Mrs Nyamande passed five O-level subjects in 1989. She was to go further. The mission authorities had been so pleased with her work at the Nutrition Village that they offered to sponsor her for a two-year course (1997-1999) at the Parirenyatwa Hospital in Harare, leading to the Diploma in Hospital Food Services. She invited me to her graduation. There, with others, she gave a little speech, during which she stated that she owed her success to me, giving details about how I had always encouraged her in her quest to 'improve herself'. I almost burst into tears (but instantly repressed them of course). I responded by

⁶ The Nutrition Village consisted of a number of traditional huts at some distance from the hospital. Mothers with severely malnourished children were transferred there once the child had initially been treated at the hospital. There they received lessons on nutrition and general childcare. They had to feed their children with nutritionally beneficial food under supervision. The woman in charge also interviewed the mothers extensively and had to find out whether they were not feeding the child correctly on account of ignorance, poverty or both. Or did her husband perhaps not give her a field for groundnuts? The women worked on the Village's groundnut and vegetable fields, reared chickens for eggs, and made peanut butter. The work they did counted as a 'fee' for the stay of mother and child at the Village. When they were discharged, they were given groundnut seeds to plant at home so that they could give their small children protein-rich peanut butter.

⁷ The Central African Correspondence College, in Harare, offered very good and affordable courses.

saying that some women needed only an initial chance (the HEDs' course in her case) and a little encouragement from time to time, because they have the desire and the willpower to progress within them. 'You have achieved this – and much more – by yourself!'

Mrs Nyamande is now the Hospital Food Supervisor at Karanda Mission Hospital and 'part of the management', as she proudly points out. Still not content, she is working on obtaining her driver's licence. 'One day you will see me driving a car all the way from Harare to Mount Darwin and back,' she says.

Her life also knew tragedy. Her son Clever died in 1998, while she was training at Parirenyatwa Hospital. He had obtained a bursary and was studying for a telecommunications degree in the Czech Republic. But 'after six years of training he never came back'. He was murdered three weeks before he was due to return to Zimbabwe. Her husband died of liver cancer in 2003.

Hers is the most spectacular success story of a Home Economics Demonstrator that I know of. But there are others who have done outstanding work in their communities after being given that initial chance to improve their own lives. Some of them we will meet again later in this book.

Seeing individual women growing, making contributions towards the development of others, and engaging in improving their home areas was one of the greatest joys of my work.



Towards the end of the year I had my first clash with a DC. He had given Women Adviser Nyakabau, who covered the somewhat remote Uzumba and Maramba TTLs in the northern part of Mrewa District, an 'adverse annual report'. Dinah Nyakabau was a tall, hard-working woman, who felt somewhat isolated and who would have dearly loved to have a colleague at least in the neighbouring Pfungwe or the northern part of Mangwende TTL.

A performance assessment report had to be completed for every civil servant annually by his or her supervisor, shortly before his or her annual increment was due. The same lengthy form was used for everybody, regardless of their rank and the nature of their job. In those days no measurable goals were set and quite a few items featured 'attitudes' or personality traits. If the subordinate was rated positively on all the thirty-nine or so items, the supervisor simply forwarded the report to the payments office and the increment was granted.

If she or he was rated negatively on any item, the supervisor was obliged to show her or him that particular item so that she or he could respond – in writing. Usually the negative rating was typed out separately. You had no right to be shown the whole report. Thus, in the subordinates' mind, having to sign for an item on which they had been rated adversely tended to mean that all your good work had been ignored and that you had been rated as 'no good at all'. However, what was termed an 'adverse report' could mean no more than that you had been rated below average on perhaps one or two minor items.

Because of the dual lines of control, the Women Adviser's performance report had to be forwarded to me. I made an appointment with the DC straight away to enquire what the problem was. I was informed that the adverse item was on her report because the women's club show in her work area had been 'a mess'. We discussed this. I had already discussed her negative rating with Mrs Nyakabau beforehand. She had explained as follows: The women's clubs shows in Uzumba TTL had been well organized by club representatives in previous years. This year a new show committee had been elected. The members had not listened to the advice she was trying to give them. True to our Section's philosophy, she had let them do things the way they thought best. And, indeed, there had been chaos at the show. There had already been a post-show area leaders' meeting and they had discussed the mistakes and omissions that had led to the chaos. Mrs Nyakabau was convinced that everybody had learned a lesson.

Dave Mirams would not listen. He apparently viewed well-organized women's club shows as feathers in his own cap, and the failure of one had disgruntled him severely. He did not want Mrs Nyakabau to have her annual increment. We did not agree, but because the Women Adviser had acted according to our Section's instructions, I used a ploy. I knew that if an annual report did not reach the payments office before the incremental date, it was assumed that all was well and the salary increment was granted automatically. So I simply allowed the report to linger in my in-tray. Dave Mirams, of course, checked the next payslip. Not used to being overridden by a mere junior, he was not amused. This early disagreement was to affect our relationship for the rest of our working days. He never forgave me for having gone against him and we never again saw eye to eye.



In November 1973, I had the pleasure of attending the installation of Chief Mashayamombe in Mondoro TTL, Hartley District.¹ He was installed by the Minister of Information, Immigration and Tourism, Pieter 'P.K.' van der Byl. The latter always cut a dashing figure in his immaculately tailored suits, though his political utterances were not to my liking. The Provincial Commissioner, Bob Woollacott, and the District Commissioner completed the top table at the ceremony, which was attended by several hundred of the chief's followers.

In Shona tradition a collateral system of succession is followed. If the founder of the dynasty had four sons - A, B, C and D - the eldest son (A), if still alive, succeeded him upon his death and assumed his name. Upon the death of A, the right to the chieftainship and the name devolved to his next younger brother (B), then to C, then to D, assuming that they were still alive. Each of these sons of the first chief is regarded as the founder of a 'house'. Once the generation of the first chief's sons has died out, the chieftainship passes to the eldest surviving son of A's house (if there are any). Upon the latter's death, it then passes to the eldest surviving son of B's house, then to C's, and then to D's. After the last chief provided by D's house dies, the process starts again - the right to the chieftainship passing to A's house, then to the eldest surviving son of B's house, and so on.

Over generations a family tree could grow to an enormous size. As chiefs usually had several wives, and births were not recorded in writing, disputes often arose as to who was the rightful successor. In pre-colonial times such disputes were sometimes resolved by one house moving away from the area and founding a new dynasty. Mysterious deaths also occurred.

In more modern times, the Ministry of Internal Affairs took great care to establish and record the genealogies of chiefs and their houses. In respect of the Mashayamombe chieftainship, it fell to the Assistant District Commissioner, Stan Fynes-Clinton, to devote several weeks of his time to resolving a dispute that had been dragging on for years. He spent hours and hours in discussion with members of the various houses who claimed the right to the chieftainship, taking meticulous notes. Eventually he was able to draw up a complete family tree.

¹ After independence, Chief Mashayamombe became a Senator.

Fynes-Clinton recounts that the family tree – pasted together from dozens of pieces of sheets of foolscap paper – covered the entire carpet of his family's lounge.² His notes and recommendations filled a further several dozen sheets. His recommendations were accepted by the ministry and apparently by the people and, importantly, by the various houses. Nevertheless, at the installation ceremony, Bob Woollacott asked the people to forget their former differences, to give their new chief their loyalty, and to concentrate on development that would benefit all of the about 20,000 inhabitants in Mashayamombe's area of jurisdiction.

As a result of their system of succession, most Shona chiefs were very old when they were appointed. Lameck Bangara, the new Chief Mashayamombe, born in 1932, was one of the exceptions. In contrast to former chiefs, he also had urban experience. He had been in wage employment as a departmental head in a large retail firm in Bulawayo for many years. This would stand him in good stead as he also assumed the position of Vice-President of the Mondoro Council.

Much preparation had gone into the installation ceremony on the part of the ministry. On the actual day, a radio operator was discreetly stationed in the bushes near the chief's kraal. As P.K. van der Byl prepared to present the chief with the regalia of his office, three Hawker Hunter jet fighters of the Rhodesian Air Force appeared on the horizon. At the exact moment the minister placed the robes on the chief's shoulders, they overflew and dipped down over the gathering with engines roaring. Two head of cattle were slaughtered to provide food, and 2,000 litres of beer were donated by Chibuku Breweries in Salisbury and Ngaduru Breweries in Hartley for the festivities that followed the ceremony. Drumming, dancing and singing went on far into the night.



During October and December 1973 I travelled to Mudzi, Goromonzi, Gatooma and Hartley district stations to interview applicants for positions as Women Advisers. The Women's Section was allocated twenty new Women Adviser posts every financial year, those posts being distributed countrywide according to need and the availability of candidates. It was up to the provincial officer to make the initial selection and up to the senior officer to make the final one. We looked for the following attributes:

- Mature woman, married, though widows and divorcees were also considered

² S.H. Fynes-Clinton, *The Shattered Jewel* (Harare: The author, 2010), 95.

- Living in the area where a Women Adviser was wanted (preferably having lived there for a number of years)
- Not married to a teacher or other civil servant (indeed, to any wage-employed man likely to be transferred out of the district at some stage)
- Preferably over thirty years of age
- Preferably Standard 6 (full primary) education or higher³
- Speaking reasonably good English
- Already involved in the development of the area she lives in – in women's clubs or other interest groups
- Acceptable to other women – whether as peer or as leader (look for evidence)
- A pleasant, preferably 'sunny', personality
- Not a Seventh Day Adventist (that would cause problems with working on Saturdays)
- Not pregnant at commencement of initial training
- Willing to practise, and preferably already practising, family planning.

Shortlisted candidates had to bring a letter of support from their chief and from their husband to the final selection interview. The latter was necessary as Women Advisers had to travel frequently, be away from home overnight, and work with male field staff in other departments. Occasionally a husband got fed up with his wife's growing independence and wrote to Wyn Wilson telling her that he was terminating his wife's employment. In response she would invite him for a discussion and, after listening to his 'problems' for a while, she would show him his letter of support. He invariably withdrew at least his overt objections.

We had an unwritten rule that, if we accepted a candidate for training, we wanted to be sure that, after her six months' initial training, she worked for a year and a half before going on 'maternity leave'. There actually was no such thing. All women in government service had to resign 'at the pleasure of her head of office' (almost always a man) on becoming pregnant. (Indeed, you had also had to resign upon getting married!) We agreed on a mutual undertaking. The Women Adviser would not become pregnant for two years from the date of her selection. Afterwards she was 'free' to have a baby. She would have to resign but, if she had worked satisfactorily, which they almost invariably did, we would keep her post open and re-appoint her after a suitable 'rest period'.

³ In those times the quality of education was rather better than it is today. A woman with Standard 6 usually spoke and wrote English remarkably well.

Thus, family planning was always discussed in detail with any applicant that the provincial officer intended to shortlist. The applicant also had to give her word of honour that she would discuss the issue with her husband and report truthfully on his decision. If she was Catholic, she had to discuss her wish to practise family planning with her priest. Through these interviews I learned that a number of rural priests were actually privately in favour of family planning, even in the 1970s, and assured women that they had their backing. Women just had to be discreet about the matter. Other Catholic applicants were already spacing their children without the knowledge of an unsympathetic priest.

The availability of a post and interviewing dates were always widely advertised in the area for a period of a month or two, by word of mouth, and at every possible public meeting. In some areas many suitable women applied; in others – such as Mudzi, a remote area – it was difficult to find a woman who had a Standard 6 education. Indeed, in this district I had to advertise and interview several times. In the end we accepted a teacher's wife. We did not usually like to do that, as teachers were liable to transfer, but at least her husband was teaching in his own home area, so he was less likely to ask for, or to accept, a transfer.



Lucy Mukombiwa, in Goromonzi District, was our youngest Women Adviser, trained in 1969, at the age of only twenty-three. She was an extrovert, wore her hair Afro-style, and her hat was always perched on it at a slight angle. She married and had her three children while she was employed with us, and accordingly had to resign three times.

In 1973 she had given birth to her daughter Chipu and had recently applied for reinstatement. I visited her in October to check whether she was in good health and had made satisfactory arrangements for the care of her baby before we allowed her to return to work. Both seemed fine to me. Her mother was to take care of the child, as she did of the elder brother. I recorded baby Chipu's feeding plan after weaning – based on food available in an average rural African home – and had it checked by Louise Allaart (the Chief Dietician in the Ministry of Health), who pronounced it perfectly suitable for a child of her age. Mrs Mukombiwa was re-appointed in time for the refresher course.

Lucy Mukombiwa had an extraordinary relationship with DC Charles Major and his wife, who seemed to treat her like a daughter rather than as a junior member of staff. To this day she has photographs of herself and the Majors displayed in her house. Charles Major once told me that

he had been very surprised and distraught at head-strong Lucy's choice of husband.

When the marriage eventually failed, owing to the latter's violence and dishonesty (he was jailed for theft), Major counselled her to seek a divorce and advised her how to proceed with legal steps. He used his influence to get her a house allocated in a Salisbury township, ahead of her place on the waiting list, so that she would have a proper home for her children, of whom she was granted custody but who were looked after by her mother during the week. (Her parents lived in town.) Lucy Mukombiwa returned to her father's home in Chinamora and worked from his house.



Two annual refresher courses for Women Advisers were held at Domboshawa during October and November of the year. These were still conducted by Nancy Laws, the Training Officer stationed in Miss Wilson's office. Those for the southern part of the country were held by Betty Mtero at the Roger Howman Hall in Fort Victoria. I was asked to give some lessons and to help supervise the courses. The first course was attended by eight of the fourteen Women Advisers from Mashonaland South, together with their colleagues from Manicaland. On the second course, six from Mashonaland South were mixed with colleagues from Mashonaland North. Thus I got to know field staff from other provinces.

During the course, I met Mrs Tsinde and learned that she was the sister of Gordon Chavunduka, the lecturer in Sociology that I had known at the university and who had encouraged me to take on this job.

'Same mother, same father?' I asked her in astonishment.⁴

'Same mother, same father,' she replied.

She explained that she had been the eldest of nine children and that, when money had become scarce in the family, she had had to leave school after Standard 6 so that her younger siblings could continue with their education. She had been happy to have been able to contribute to her brother's school fees until she got married. Her *lobola*,⁵ too, had contributed to his education and to that of their brother, Dexter, who became Rhodesia's first black veterinary surgeon and was employed in government service.



⁴ It was (and is) customary in African culture to call all cousins 'brothers' and 'sisters'.

⁵ The 'bride price' paid by the future son-in-law's family, or by himself, to the father of the bride.

My input into the courses included ‘the value of books’, the introduction of the Women Advisers’ library, and lessons in civic affairs. After my first tours of their work areas, I knew that Women Advisers seldom read; I had spotted no books in any of their homes. Thus I started a tin-trunk library for them, buying books (all of them short) written either in Shona or in English, and included both instructional ones and books to read for recreation.

I envisaged that Women Advisers would in due course help women’s clubs in their work areas to start simple libraries, so the lending and reference system had to be simple enough for club members to operate. The librarian of the Domboshawa Training Centre gave me advice on how to set up a very modest indexing and recording system for the books they borrowed, and being interested in what Women Advisers thought about what they read and what kinds of books they liked, I devised a simple evaluation form.

I introduced my mobile library at this course. I invited Mrs Masona, Editorial Assistant at the Rhodesia Literature Bureau,⁶ to give a talk on ‘The Value of Books in One’s Life’, which she delivered in an inspiring manner. Every course participant was then invited to choose a book from the tin-trunk library. Books with recipes or instructions for homecraft skills were excluded for this exercise. Every Woman Adviser was given an evaluation sheet to fill in. This served as the basis for a short review of the book that she was required to give to her colleagues during a later course session. In this way, every Women Adviser learned about the content of more than twenty books in the library and heard a colleague’s opinion of each.

The idea of reading for pleasure was quite novel to them; up to now, most had read books only at school, most of them instructional, but many were able to inspire others with their reviews. From then on I carried my library permanently in the boot of my Renault 6. Many Women Advisers took books out whenever I visited, and most also quite voluntarily filled in the evaluation forms, happy to give their opinion. Individuals differed in their love for reading, though: within a year, Lucy Mukombiwa had taken out thirteen books, while one of her colleagues took out only one.

I had a good chuckle a few years later. I had slipped a copy of George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* into the library. At the time, civil servants were not allowed to be actively involved in politics. We were not even allowed to ask questions at public meetings held by established politicians or candidates for election, though we could do so at closed meetings held specifically for

⁶ The Rhodesia Literature Bureau was founded in 1959 with the purpose of fostering indigenous literature and the development and standardization of the Shona and Ndebele languages.

civil servants. It is quite true, of course, that your political persuasion can often be deduced from the type of questions you ask. In the TTLs, to 'be political' was deemed to mean 'supporting the nationalists', and was therefore not approved of by the administration.

Mrs Nhavira, who read the book first, returned it to me with a glint in her eye, saying, 'But this is a political book.' 'Yes, it is,' I said, 'but only about politics on a farm, between animals.' We both laughed. The book did the rounds, was much liked and evoked much discussion. After that the Women Advisers often told me their political views. They were not much interested in party politics per se, but they certainly knew the grievances of the people they worked with in respect of how they were governed.

It also occurred to me that most Women Advisers had probably never been inside a bookshop and most likely would never dare to enter one. So, sometime later, I went to negotiate with the Book Centre - *the* bookshop in Salisbury. I explained that I wanted to bring my staff to help them overcome their fear of entering a bookshop, to familiarize them with how such a shop is organized, and to encourage them to perhaps eventually enter one by themselves and buy a book.

The manager and staff were most accommodating. They advised me



Mrs Naomi Shekede (Marandellas) and Mrs Bertha Chida (Gatooma) choose books from the tin-trunk library



Women Advisers Nkomo and Mukombiwa at the Book Centre

to bring my group on the day of the week they were least busy, when they welcomed us warmly and explained how the books were arranged (for instance, that they were grouped into subject topics). Then they divided the group into two - one browsing in the lower floor, one in the upper. They told the

Women Advisers that if they saw a book that interested them they could take it off the shelf and look through it. Thus reassured, they gradually lost their uneasiness.

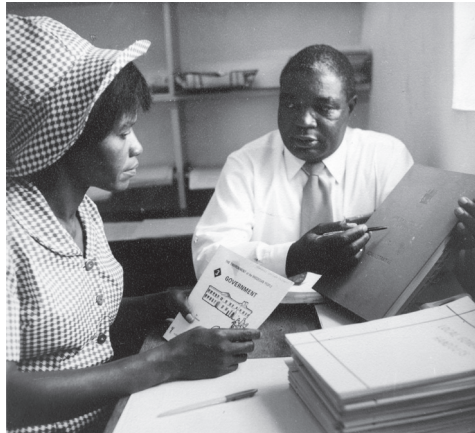


I introduced civic affairs training on this refresher course, starting with lessons on 'How (Central) Government Works'. I knew that Women Advisers had not developed any note-taking skills, so I prepared roneo'd sheets containing the main points of my two-hour lesson, with lines underneath each point on which my listeners could write their own notes. I noticed that hardly any were taken. Another skill to develop.

At the end of the session, each Women Adviser was handed a copy of Roger Howman's booklet, *Government*, and asked to read specific pages.⁷ The second session was planned as a quiz, based on the content of their reading. However, there was too much pressure on the course, and the quiz had to be omitted. Just as well. I spent another hour answering questions that had arisen from the Women Advisers' own reading. They said they found the booklet 'difficult', as so much information was packed into it. I had made unwarranted assumptions about 'research skills', but had also left them with more questions in their minds than they had ever asked themselves before. I realized that the lesson would have to be repeated and expanded. Simple handouts would be essential.

It also transpired that most, if not all, Women Advisers were under the impression that they were not allowed to register as voters 'since as civil servants we are not allowed to be involved in politics'. That was, of course, not correct. We were only not allowed to hold positions in a political party or to state our opinion, or ask questions, at a public political meeting.

A few of them would have qualified for the African voters' roll in terms of income and education. However, Women Advisers seemed to be generally



**Women Adviser Susan Sakuringwa
doing research on central government**

⁷ Roger Howman, *Government* (Salisbury: M.O.Collins, Environment of the Rhodesian People Series, 1974).

Essay Competition: The Role of the Women Adviser

Sheila Hawkins and I, keen to check how Women Advisers understood their role and how well they were able to express themselves, launched an essay competition for both Mashonaland provinces with the theme 'The Role of the Women Adviser'. We bought small prizes as encouragement, though participation was compulsory. We got Wyn Wilson to judge the compositions, criteria being both content and the use of English.

In Mashonaland South, 1st prize was won by Flora Nkomo of Hartley, 2nd prize by Bertha Chida of Gatooma, and 3rd prize by N. Chitekwe of Mtoko District. The two winning essays were circulated to all their peers, and I managed to get Mrs Chida's published in the *Homecraft Magazine*, which pleased her immensely.

unaware of this, and they also seemed not to be sufficiently interested in national politics to register as voters. Whether or not they were also influenced by nationalists' endeavours to boycott the African voters' roll, I do not know. On the other hand, they were intensely interested in local politics and would have wanted to be involved in council affairs. Council areas were small enough for them to identify with. They could discuss the qualities of individual councillors in detail and whether or not they were interested in developing their wards, whether they held report-back meetings with their ward members, and whether they supported women's concerns. However, women were disenfranchised at local authority level.



I cannot remember how aware I was of the severity of the security position in the country at this time. Quite possibly I was in denial.

Talks between Ian Smith and Harold Wilson on HMS *Tiger* (December 1966) and HMS *Fearless* (October 1968), and the Pearce Commission (1972), set up to test the Rhodesian people's opinion on proposals for an Anglo-Rhodesian settlement, had been and gone. The border with Zambia was closed in January 1974. External diplomacy had failed. Government now tried to wipe out internal support for the insurgents based outside the country. A carrot-and-stick approach was used. In February, schools, shops and churches were closed in Chiweshe TTL (Mazoe District), while the army swept through to flush out insurgents. Cattle were impounded. Substantial rewards were offered for reporting terrorists. Military intelligence improved but the people became embittered about the collective punishments. This in turn made them more susceptible to political propaganda from the insurgents. The same approach was propagated in parts of Mashonaland South.

In Mrewa, the DC had issued the letter that follows. I had been

unaware of it, as I was not yet stationed at province and nobody briefed me later.

Much of Mashonaland Central and some parts of Mashonaland South (Mudzi, Mtoko and the north-western part of Mrewa District) were declared an operational area, with headquarters in Bindura, and military and police activities therein were dubbed 'Operation Hurricane'. It was

Office of the District Commissioner Mrewa
27 February 1973

TO ALL THE PEOPLE IN THE MREWA DISTRICT

I have been your District Commissioner for the past five years and during this time we have lived together well and made much progress. Now I am sending you this message so that you will all understand.

In recent months terrorists have come into some districts of Rhodesia and have caused much trouble for the people in those districts. Many of the terrorists have been killed or captured by our soldiers and policemen.

It might happen that terrorists will come into Mrewa districts and come to your villages looking for food and asking you to help them. I must warn you that these are bad men who will bring great troubles upon you. If any strangers are seen in your area you must send word to me or to the B.S.A. Police. Do not wait until you see a policeman or one of my messengers but rather come on a bus to Mrewa as soon as you can to make a report. I will arrange that you receive a refund for your bus fare. If the information you give leads to the arrest or the killing of terrorists, or those people who help them, you may receive a good reward.

If it comes to the ears of Government that any of you have helped terrorists, or that you knew they were in your area and you did not report their presence, you will be severely punished.

The punishments may be:

- Schools in your area being closed.
- Business centres in your area being closed.
- Buses will be stopped from operating in your area.
- Hospitals and clinics in your area will be closed.
- The Provincial Commissioner will order you to pay heavy fines and when you cannot pay your cattle will be taken and sold to pay these fines.
- You may be arrested and sent to prison for a long time.

The Government does not want to punish you but if you do not listen to these warnings you will be bringing these punishments upon yourselves. Now you have been warned. I urge you to take notice of this warning so that you may continue to live in peace and look forward to further progress.

A. W. Walters
District Commissioner
Mrewa

the first to be declared an operational area and the only one until 1976, by which time the war had spread to most of the country.

ZANLA – the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army, the military wing of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) – had started resorting to abductions to swell their ranks. On 5 July 1973, the first large-scale abduction of school children had taken place. I remember being deeply shocked at what I considered to be abuse.

Two hundred and ninety-five pupils and staff were marched from St Albert's Mission in the Centenary area [Mashonaland North]. Rhodesian security forces intercepted the column and all but eight were returned. Although many young men [and some young women] left schools to join the guerrillas voluntarily, the abduction attempts increased in the following years.⁸

I was later to meet the heartbreak of mothers whose children either left voluntarily without saying goodbye or were abducted.

In spite of the parameters within which it took place, my first full year in community development had been fulfilling. I did not encounter any obvious signs of a 'security situation' in the field. I certainly never had any sense of being in danger and I roamed freely in my Renault 6. Yet guerrillas had infiltrated from Mozambique into the north-eastern districts of my work area, into Mudzi, Mtoko and Mrewa districts, and were busy 'conscientizing' the rural people. I encountered the first reference to their presence by women themselves in Mangwende TTL. The women's clubs were not doing as well as they had done before, and many members were reluctant to make their annual contribution of twenty-five cents to club funds. 'We do not have the money,' some declared. I asked what they were using the money for that they had formerly paid to their clubs so willingly. 'We pay it to the *vakomana* [the guerrillas, literally 'the boys'],' one eventually volunteered. Slowly I gathered that a network of political 'cells' was being formed in the area. 'What do you expect to get from "the boys" that you don't get from your clubs?' I asked. 'Our country,' was the reply. It was likely that the women could have paid both if they had really wanted to. I suspected that participation in women's clubs was being discouraged.

I never initiated discussions about national politics with local women myself. There was always immediate business at hand, which was why the groups had invited me to visit them. But occasionally some broached the subject themselves. Over time I was astonished at what the women would

⁸ Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980* (Marshalltown: Sygma/Collins, 1982), 28.

tell me, mostly about people's feelings, sometimes about what could be classed as 'security matters'. They all knew that I was employed by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and that I could easily have reported on them. I never did. Not ever, even during the height of the war.

On another occasion, in Mangwende, I asked, 'What will life in your independent country be like?' The women told me their vision: free schooling for their children, free healthcare for all, no racial discrimination in town, but also no de-stocking and no more irksome contour ridges to be dug.⁹ They assured me, without my having asked any leading questions, that they did not hate Europeans, nor did their menfolk – indeed, that we would all live in harmony in their utopia. There would be harmony because rude white people would no longer insult them. The freedom fighters would bring them all this. They supported them for this reason but also because they were 'their children'.

Insurgents had filtered into northern and north-eastern Mashonaland from Zambia and Mozambique. In the Zambezi valley, people had become successfully indoctrinated and the important Shona spirit mediums of the valley had come to support the *chimurenga* (the liberation war) and its harbingers. At the time I did not know of the spirit mediums' support (such intelligence did not reach the newspapers or my own office) and I was still unaware of the profound impact that their support would have on the course of the war.



In October, at the request of the Provincial Commissioner Mashonaland North, I attended a meeting on 'the rehabilitation of persons detailed for Sowe, Hoya and Mukumbura villages'. I did so in lieu of Miss Wilson or Miss Hawkins, neither of whom was available. I cannot remember what was discussed, but the term 'rehabilitation' suggests that moving people into the Protected Villages (PVs) already established in Mount Darwin District was a punitive measure.

⁹ Contour ridges were necessary means of protecting the soil against erosion from run-off during the rains. Their presence also ensured better moisture retention for the dry season.



Wives of Chiefs from Mashonaland South on a field visit during their training course, at the top of Salisbury Kopje, 1973



1974





The year 1974 began with a pat on the back from Bob Woollacott after he had received my Annual Report for 1973, which provided me with an encouraging start for the year:

What an excellent and well-written report – concise, informative and interesting and extremely well written.

Thank you and congratulations on an excellent start to your career with the Ministry.

Sheila Hawkins left the Women's Section at the end of January 1974 and, regrettably, I never met her again. Dorianne Graham-Jolly, recently divorced, joined us soon after Sheila left and replaced her in Mashonaland North. Dorianne had been a lecturer in Sociology at the University of Rhodesia, when I worked there as a research assistant between 1970 and 1972. We had soon become close friends and had kept in contact after I left. I was overjoyed at the thought of having her as my colleague in the development field, with her sunny, extrovert personality and sense of humour, and I looked forward to the opportunities that would arise to discuss our work.

At the beginning of 1974, I visited all the district stations to help the Women Advisers plan their work for the coming year – that is, to discuss the aspects that they should concentrate on. Whenever possible, I also discussed these with the DC or his representative. I attended a number of district team meetings to get to know the development trends and the field staff.

In Mtoko, DC John Saunders replaced Frank Taylor, who had headed the station for seven years. In Mrewa, Dave Mirams replaced A.W. Walters.

The diminutive Alison Watson, who had recently been appointed PCDOW Matabeleland North (straight out of university), accompanied me on field visits during the week of 18–22 February to familiarize herself with aspects of field work. I enjoyed having her with me and getting to know her. I did not often have company on my long journeys or the opportunity to share my joy in my work with others. Apart from quarterly two-day staff meetings, we PCDOWs had little opportunity for contact with each other. Alison had a distinct advantage over the rest of us: she spoke Ndebele fluently, having learned it as a child on her parents' farm.

While Alison was with me I held some follow-up meetings with the HEDs who had been trained in 1972 and 1973. It took me most of

February to cover them all. The Women Advisers working in the relevant areas were always present. The purpose of the meetings was as follows:

- To ascertain whether home economics trainees were passing on the knowledge gained on their initial training course to women in their areas.
- To discuss and resolve difficulties they encountered in the field.
- To award badges to those who proved to be active.
- To find out whether the HEDs would like to attend a one-week refresher course in June.
- To find out what subjects they would like to be included in the refresher course.

A total of fifty-three HEDs had been trained in the province. Of these, two were subsequently trained as Adult Literacy Teachers and found employment, one was currently being trained as a Women Adviser (Bertha Chibisa, Mudzi), one had found employment in a pre-school in an urban area, and another had been initially trained for a homecraft club formed by wives of prison staff in Salisbury.

Of the forty-eight HEDs therefore invited, thirty-eight attended the meetings. I could not help being delighted by the attendance, which was even more remarkable as the HEDs had to pay their own bus fares and provide their own food for the day of the meetings. For some, the journey even involved an overnight stay. Four women who did not attend were later reported to have been prevented from reaching their destination on account of swollen rivers or otherwise impassable roads. One, perhaps more, never received the invitation; that the others all got them was perhaps a miracle in itself. There were, of course, no postal deliveries to households in the TTLs or APAs. There were deliveries to schools and certain shops, where the person unofficially responsible for the mail put all the letters into an open cardboard box, through which people in the neighbourhood rummaged to find any letters addressed to them.

The fact that I did not call one big gathering but met small groups at eight central places in their own work areas proved very useful, as I was able to gather a lot of detailed information by means of both personal interviews, based on a semi-structured schedule and group discussions. This was the basis for my writing a comprehensive report on which to base further training and interaction. I even produced a map showing the distribution of HEDs in the province. I had such a chance only this once.

The level of activity of the vast majority of trainees, given that they were unpaid workers, was impressive. Most shared the knowledge they had gained with women's club members, on invitation, either at club meetings or on local courses. A few had gained access to other groups. I had often

Shona territorial groupings

In Shona society there are three distinct territorial groupings. The chiefdom comprises several wards, the ward of a number of kraals. The kraal (*musha*, pl. *misha*; lit. 'village') is under the authority of a kraal head (*samusha*). Several kraals fall within a tribal ward (*dunhu*) under the authority of a hereditary headman (*sadhunu*), and several tribal wards make up the chiefdom (*nyika*), under the authority of a hereditary chief (*ishe*).

A kraal is primarily a kinship unit, the head of the family being acknowledged as kraal head, though its composition varies. Its core comprises male descendants of the same forefather and their wives and offspring. In larger kraals, however, there were households related by marriage or even strangers who had been granted the right to live there by the head of the kraal.

been told by women that 'men should also get such lessons', notably on nutrition, environmental hygiene, the need for clean water supplies, causes of diseases and household budgeting. I had never personally responded to these suggestions, but some of the HEDs had sought and gained access to audiences that included men.

A trainee in Sanyati, for example, gave talks at Intensive Conservation Area meetings, which were attended by more men than women, and spoke about the need for safe water supplies, for rubbish pits and pot stands (wooden racks on high poles to keep cooking utensils drying in the sun away from the attention of goats and dogs), and for balanced nutrition. Another, in Chikwakwa, had obtained a letter of introduction to kraal heads from her chief. She visited kraals rather than clubs and so received no compensation for her bus fares, but she acquired a mixed audience of men and women to whom she talked about community development, the need for protected wells, and about balanced nutrition, concentrating on the needs of children under the age of five. Another, in Wedza, gained access to area development committees, which were composed largely of men. Others had taught Young Farmers Clubs in which there were a fair number of adolescent boys.



Another interesting development came to the fore. Where women's club area leaders (chairwomen, secretaries, etc.) had been selected for HED training, a different woman had been elected to such posts at the next club elections. Where we had chosen an area trainer – already trained by a specific women's club umbrella organization to provide teaching to their own clubs – to come for HED training, a different woman was now sent for training for the (voluntary) position of area trainer. HEDs

were expected to teach any women's club or interest group, regardless of affiliation. Women's club members believed that as many different women as possible should be given the chance to get into leadership positions. They also believed that as many women as possible should receive the coveted training, rather than a few being trained by one organization and then being 'topped up' by another.

I had gathered information from Women Advisers on the levels of activity beforehand. Based on this, I had classified the HEDs as 'active', 'semi-active' and 'non-active' voluntary workers. I was highly satisfied that HEDs, with one exception, did not try to inflate their level of activity when they gave their reports to the group. Four of the five, who had done far less work than we had hoped, had explanations such as pregnancy or illness, which were corroborated by others.

There were obstacles, too, not just successes. About half of the HEDs reported difficulty in having their travel expenses met by the clubs, and about a quarter reported difficulty in obtaining demonstration materials from them for lessons. Women Advisers were asked to explain the guidelines again at club area meetings:

- When invited to give a lesson to a club, travelling expenses and demonstration materials should be met by the inviting club.
- While demonstration materials should be provided by the inviting club, a garment made by the demonstrator during lessons would belong to the club, who may wish to sell it to recover the expenses for the material used.
- When invited to teach at a local course, travel expenses and demonstration materials should be paid for from course registration fees.

It was apparent once again that women very rarely got funding for courses or club activities from sources other than their own. Most members paid individual fees, but some groups also got land allocated by the chief on which they grew crops for raising club funds, the members working there in small groups in rotation. Self-reliance as well as voluntary work was well established.

The highlight of these meeting days was the awarding of badges to all those confirmed as 'active'. Wyn Wilson had had badges produced with the inscription 'Home Economics Demonstrator'. I handed these over very formally, with a handshake and a few words of appreciation of specific work well done. The Women Adviser present pinned the badge on the recipient's garment. I took the opportunity to demonstrate where it should be fastened. I had seen too many badges pinned over the highest point of the bosom! Together we worked out a 'code of honour' in regard

to the much-appreciated badges. As long as a woman wore one, she was expected to do voluntary work, as initially agreed to. If at any time she found that she was no longer able or willing to 'pass on her knowledge', she was free to hand it back to the Women Adviser, who would hand it back to me.

In addition to the follow-up, I made the final selection of applicants for the next HED initial course, planned for 11 March to 5 April, when I would be visiting the districts. I accepted twenty.



The 1969 constitution had provided for a Senate of twenty-three members, ten of whom were chiefs, nominated and elected by the Council of Chiefs. During 1974 a request came from the highest quarters to conduct a course for the wives of Senator chiefs 'so that they would know how to behave at Government House'. At extremely short notice, Miss Wilson summoned the officers of the Section to her office.

A ten-day course programme was put together. Mainly, the participants would be helped to dress appropriately for official government functions, how to conduct themselves at dinners and garden parties at Government House, how to use the services of a hotel, how to order meals from a menu, how to use the multitude of eating implements placed on the table, how to rise to make a 'loyal toast', how to set a table (should any VIP ever visit their home for a meal), and how and where to shop for clothes.

The course was held at the Ambassador Hotel, situated across the road



Debbie Allan

Debbie Allan joined our Section, also straight from university, in March or April, and was stationed with me for a while, before being posted to the Midlands. She had taken Shona at first-year university level, which was a big advantage.

Her time with me was a great joy to me. I knew at once that she would make an excellent PCDOW from the way she related to Women Advisers and rural women on a basis of equality but immediately gaining their respect. She had a very organized mind capable of focusing on the fundamentals whereas I tended to drown in detail. I knew that she would make a significant contribution to the development of our Section, already so important to me.

from Parliament and the Senate, and frequented by members of both. It had removed the signboard 'Admission Reserved', which in practice meant 'whites only', that was still displayed at most hotels.¹

The participants were accommodated in double rooms with twin beds, which swiftly replaced the more customary double beds in some rooms. Very few of them had ever been in a hotel. We officers met them on arrival, which, helpfully, was staggered on account of the arrival times of buses. A few husbands brought their wives by car. One of us always settled a pair into their room, explaining cupboards, bathrooms, taps, telephone (which hardly any of them ever dared to use), laundry services, room-key etiquette, and the workings of the lift. Some never quite trusted that contraption and preferred to use the stairs to the end. Then we had tea and introductions were made.

The participants tried out the bathtubs – to much laughter and sometimes horror – before we met again for the evening meal. We had arranged that meals would be served in a private dining room. Wyn Wilson (when present), Alison Stewart, Nancy Laws, Dorianne Graham-Jolly and I spread ourselves evenly between our charges. At first the ladies were served standard menus – à la carte orders would be faced later.

We showed the Senator chiefs' wives how to order their choice from the menu, how to act when the waiter came to serve them, how to use the eating implements, and how to place the serviette on their laps. Most of them, but not all, needed this. Not all were literate, so a way to order without having to read the menu had to be found.

Some of the waiters (all of them black), not used to serving African women, lost all their graces, gawked at them, and certainly did not serve them as they would have served 'ordinary' guests. After the second day we had to call on management, who always behaved impeccably, to read them the riot act.

We had much fun together. The participants quickly learned that we were not as arrogant as they might have feared, that we laughed *with* them and not *at* them. We also confessed with true anecdotes the faux pas that we ourselves had made in the rural areas, not being familiar enough with their culture. Rural people had always graciously and silently forgiven us. Now the chiefs' wives learned to laugh with us about our mistakes and even to make us aware of some.

A lesson on 'laying a table' was necessary as rural people, generally, did not eat at tables; most of them did not have any. In traditional homes, men usually ate separately from women and children, the men

¹ In terms of the Land Tenure Act, a permit was needed to operate multiracial premises.

being served first, the adults balancing their plates on their laps and the children's being placed on the ground. However, men who made it to being Senators had usually modernized their homes considerably.

For the table-setting session, Wyn Wilson brought her immaculate dinner service from home – mine was deemed too bohemian for women who aspire to mix with the upper middle class. I also told to wear the most formal clothes I possessed so as not to confuse the course participants about middle-class standards.

Other lessons included 'What Happens at a Party at Government House', 'Protocol', and 'Dress Sense'. The owner of Barbours department store reserved an evening for us, when he himself talked on 'Suitable Attire for Official Functions'. Appropriate dresses, shoes and handbags were modelled for our group. These were suitably stodgy, both for the taste of the participants and for Mr Barbour himself. He was a great admirer of the Queen Mother and her style of dressing. He showed us many pictures of Her Majesty at official functions, pointing out how well she had chosen her clothes and accessories.

Mr Barbour was truly gracious and he personally served each of us a glass of sherry or orange juice. Then the Senator chiefs' wives were allowed to browse through the clothes horses to their hearts' content. His well-trained staff never showed the slightest hint of impatience, and the evening was greatly enjoyed by all. Indeed, the participants never stopped talking about it.

To our credit, let it be said that we did not concentrate exclusively on social graces. We also included lessons on 'The Difference between Parliament and the Senate', 'How the Senate Works' and 'The Work of a Senator' – none of which had been asked for by 'the highest quarters' – and 'The Role of a Senator Chief's Wife'. We took them on a guided tour of the Senate and Parliament and, during the second week, took two small groups separately to the public gallery to watch their husbands at work.

The last evening meal – after much practising – took place in the hotel's public dining room in the form of a gala dinner at a festively decorated table, with much cutlery and several types of glasses at each setting, and serviettes folded into swans. A few VIPs from the ministry attended and were duly greeted by a small reception committee of Senator chiefs' wives. Admittedly, our table created a bit of a stir among the other diners, who, however, did do their best to be discreet. Meals now had to be ordered à la carte. There was a speech and a toast was raised. We had practised, of course – right down to the gesture you make if you do not want your glass filled to the top but only want enough wine for the toast.

The wives of Senator chiefs and members of the Council of Chiefs

differed greatly in age, in education and in sophistication, depending on whether the chief had sent his senior wife, as he should have, or a junior wife, and on the age of the chief himself. There was the old illiterate woman who arrived in a *dhuku* and takkies and had hardly ever even been to Salisbury.² There was the middle-aged woman who had trained as a nurse and worked in a hospital overseas and who came attired in an elegant shop-bought hat and costume jewellery. I sat opposite this nursing sister at the gala dinner. I discovered that she had gone for training overseas while already married and a mother.

‘No problem for the children, they can always be looked after for a few years by relatives or by a junior wife,’ she declared.

‘I don’t think my husband would ever have allowed me to do such a thing,’ I said to her, by way of making conversation.

She bent over the table, looked me in the eye and said, in a clearly audible whisper, ‘Your husband is jealous. Husbands are like little boys, but as men they have power. You have to learn how to make him believe that he has *all* the power. You have to know how to deal with a jealous husband!’ She then gave me copious advice on how to treat such a man.

All the other diners and the ministry officials, including Miss Wilson, having left, we relaxed. It was sanctions time and liqueurs were a scarce commodity in Rhodesia.³ Dorianne and I were looking forward to rounding off the busy fortnight with a sample or two from the well-stocked liqueur trolley that the head wine waiter had proudly shown us earlier. Some of the more daring Senator chiefs’ wives said they would join us. It turned out that most of them actually did not like the liqueurs they had sipped at and thus Dorianne and I, not believing in waste, had rather a lot.

The evening was rounded off with singing – African style – though quite sedate so as not to disturb any of the sleeping guests. And then we danced for a while, women being happy together.

In the morning we officers were all present again, helping our new friends to book out of the hotel and find their way to whatever transport they were to use for their journey home.

The course did wonders for the relationship between Dorianne, myself and the wives of chiefs in our respective provinces. Regrettably, however, neither of us was ever invited to Government House!

² A *dhuku* is a traditional headscarf; takkies are simple canvas ‘tennis shoes’ (both from Afrikaans).

³ In its attempt to force Rhodesia to abandon its unilaterally declared independence, UDI, on 11 November 1965, the United Nations imposed economic sanctions against the country in December 1966. Among other things, these forbade the purchase of Rhodesian tobacco, chrome, copper, asbestos and meat, and the sale of petroleum products. One of the consequences was that foreign currency for imports, even from countries willing to trade openly or clandestinely, became extremely short.



One of my next field visits was to Women Adviser Flora Nkomo in Chief Mashayamombe's area of Mondoro TTL in Hartley District. She was one of our early trained Women Advisers, an older woman with a dignified bearing who exuded authority without ever being bossy. The first women's groups I met there – attending a four-day local course that she had organized – asked for training for their husbands, especially on balanced nutrition for children, sanitation, and household and farm budgeting. 'We cannot implement what we learn without our husbands' support – they need better understanding!' they said.

Two other groups I met made the same request. Unfortunately we could never engage in such training for men, but one of the things I did do was mention these topics when I was asked to give a talk at shows. These being joyous occasions, I usually confined myself to praise for those husbands who 'understand and support their wives in their desire to build family toilets, give their wives fields to grow groundnuts so that they can give their children body-building foods after weaning', and so on. I praised those who had learned farm budgeting from the agricultural demonstrators, and mentioned that many wives had also learned to budget for households.

From 11 March to 5 April, I conducted another initial course for HEDs – for six women from Mudzi, three from Mtoko, seven from Goromonzi, three from Gatooma and one from Hartley District. Then it was time for field visits again.

The women's clubs of umbrella organizations were beginning to lose postal contact with their club and area committee representatives in sensitive areas. Their own representatives no longer travelled there, and thus personal contact and training opportunities in these districts were also lost. The umbrella organizations were, however, most willing to continue to support women's clubs and eager to maintain contact. They therefore planned courses to be held at Domboshawa and other centres in Salisbury specifically for women from sensitive areas. I offered to do the recruiting via the Women Advisers. In earlier years such an offer would have neither been made nor accepted; now, both parties realized that even closer co-operation between us was necessary.

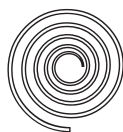
For me it entailed a great deal of additional administrative work, which I willingly undertook. We also wanted the clubs and their co-ordinating committees to continue to function as before, as far as possible. Thus Women Advisers did not simply do the recruiting themselves. While they handled the advertising for the courses, they did their very best to

encourage area and district committees to meet and to convene general meetings to select women to go on the courses. Where general meetings were not possible, they let the committees do the selecting. In other districts, the women's club organizations continued to do their own advertising and recruiting, and their trainers continued to visit as before.

As the first experiment WGL arranged for three sewing courses in Salisbury in April, May and June, with fifteen of the twenty places on each offered to sensitive areas in Mashonaland South. Women Advisers Nyakabau, Gurupira, Chitekwe, Psuura and Chibisa managed between them to recruit twelve women for each course.



Participants in a course for wives of Senator chiefs and wives of members of the Council of Chiefs, with Wyn Wilson, Betty Mtero, Arlene Fullard



Sometimes my field visits took place in unorthodox settings. On 2 April 1974, I made a follow-up visit to Mrs Lydia Psuura, Women Adviser in training for Mudzi District, who was on a field placement with Mrs Naomi Shekede in Chiota TTL (Marandellas). We met at a crossing along Charter Road, intending to proceed to see various projects. However, as it began pouring with rain, we remained sitting in my car, discussing what Mrs Psuura had learned on her field placement.

She was particularly impressed with the farming groups that had been formed in 1973, comprised mainly of women, with committees made up entirely of women. No such women's farming groups existed in Chief Nyamukoho's area, where she was going to work. Asked if these groups saw the need for planting trees (Chiota, like Seki, was particularly denuded of trees), she said she had not thought of asking this. Mrs Shekede volunteered that the councils maintained tree plantations, growing gum trees for building and pine trees for firewood, both for sale. There was also a fruit-tree nursery, financed by the African Development Fund (ADF),¹ where women could buy young trees to plant at their homes, but they had not yet shown much interest in these.

After discussing with Mrs Shekede the most urgent matters in her work area, we had some refreshments at a local shop. I left the Women Advisers for some informal discussions with women who had taken shelter there and drove home in the continuing downpour. Seeing a stranger always spawned curiosity. I was told later that Mrs Shekede had introduced the topic of fruit trees to the women while they were chatting, saying that I had come to see the ADF nursery but would return to visit it on a sunny day. This created sufficient interest that one of the women – a member of a farming group – arranged for her group to visit the nursery to receive lessons on growing fruit trees. Just one small example of a Women Adviser 'leading from behind'.

¹ The African Development Fund was administered by the Development Section of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the section concerned with the material development of the African rural areas, including the marketing of produce and livestock, the provision of dipping services, the development and maintenance of irrigation schemes, and the construction of major roads, bridges and dams.



Part of May and most of June I spent at the Domboshawa training centre. I wished I had an office there, as carting items backwards and forwards was tedious, and I would have liked to escape to my own space from time to time, but this was never to be.

I ran two ten-day courses for the wives of chiefs, followed by three one-week refresher courses for HEDs. Obviously I did not do all the training myself, but I planned and organized the courses, selected experts to give lessons, and held briefing and de-briefing meetings with them. I had to be present most of the time to monitor, to provide continuity and to establish relationships. In my training career most of my courses were 'one-off' events and thus needed individual planning. I also had to cope with the administrative matters of invitations, evaluations, seeing to the typing and duplicating of course handouts, and had to produce reports on the courses for my bosses' information and my own future reference. All the same, I sometimes had to absent myself to participate in various meetings and to make three supportive/decision-making visits to Women Advisers in the field. While I had plenty energy and enthusiasm, I was beginning to feel overstretched.

The two ten-day courses for wives of chiefs that I held towards the end of April and the end of May deserve special mention. There were thirty-five chiefs in Mashonaland South. A total of eight were either Senators or members of the Council of Chiefs. Their wives had attended one of their exclusive courses and were thus not invited. One chief was recently widowed. To my surprise and satisfaction, all of the remaining twenty-six chiefs sent – or, rather, allowed – a wife to attend; some had taken part in the 1973 course.

My course objectives were to

- orient wives of chiefs towards progress (defined as 'new ideas' and 'new ways of doing things')
- widen their general knowledge, bearing in mind their role as 'mothers of the people'
- meet the training needs that participants on the 1973 course had voiced (they had asked for lessons on public speaking, community development, local government, adult literacy, and cattle grazing schemes)
- encourage wives of chiefs to involve themselves actively in women's clubs.

As far as possible, the lessons were given in Shona by an African trainer. Nancy Laws, who taught 'dress sense', and I made use of a translator –

usually a Women Adviser. Although I taught only 'public speaking', I was present in the classroom most of the time.

My notes on the public-speaking lessons are based mainly on the first course, and the second was quite similar. Of the sixteen participants in the first 1974 course, nine were illiterate. A theory lesson preceded the practicals. Together we made the following simple guidelines:

- Do not stray from the subject.
- Do not make the speech too long.
- Do not agree to speak on a subject you know little about.
- Keep in mind the group you are speaking to.
- Do not be self-conscious.
- Be confident – you have much experience of life.
- Do not be intimidated by the thought of speaking to superior [read 'educated'] groups such as the wives of Agricultural Demonstrators or teachers.
- Times have changed: you can even take the initiative and address groups made up of men and women.

Each course participant prepared a five-minute speech on a topic of her own choice to a specific imagined audience. Together we evaluated each performance. Most did quite well, but we needed to boost their confidence, for the burden of 'having to give a good example' to women in general had prevented many of them from ever speaking in public before. The topics they chose included: How to look after your husband; How women's clubs can help you to look after your family; Why grazing schemes are good; Even girl children should go to school; Do not be shy to go to literacy classes.

The trainer who gave lessons on local government, Mr T.M. Zengeya, commented that wives of chiefs had very little knowledge about how councils worked – indeed, considerably less than the average participant in HEDs' courses – even though chiefs were ex officio members of councils: 'It appears that chiefs do not discuss this subject with their wives. The course participants said afterwards: 'We are very pleased to have had these lessons. Now we know something about our husbands' work in councils.'

My friend Janet Gwanzura, a staff member of ALOR and by now a teacher-trainer, gave the adult literacy lesson. Its objectives were:

- To give chiefs' wives information about the aims of ALOR, the teacher training it provides, the cost of training and remunerating an Adult Literacy Teacher, and the mechanics of setting up an adult literacy project.
- To give them a realistic idea of the teaching methods used by ALOR-trained instructors.

During the afternoon session, she gave the first lesson that a student attending a literacy class would normally be taught. Two course participants, one of them actually illiterate, volunteered to be students. All the illiterate wives were delighted that by the end of the lesson they had actually learned to read their first two words, just by observing. 'It might be possible after all,' they exclaimed, 'even for old women like us to learn to read!'

Some course participants had heard that Senator chiefs' wives had had lessons on 'how to dress well'. They requested similar lessons – not that they ever had much choice in how to dress, as their husbands usually bought their clothes when the harvest came in. Training Officer Nancy Laws came to give them an excellent lesson on dress sense, with very humorous drawings on flip charts. It was the very last lesson that Nancy Laws ever gave: at the end of June she had to retire on medical grounds.

It was fortunate that the WGL was running a course for their mobile unit demonstrators at the same time. The fabric producer David Whitehead had laid on a fashion show for them (advertising David Whitehead's materials, of course) and their course director invited us to the show. It was a most enjoyable follow-up to Nancy's lesson.

A representative of the Family Planning Association (FPA) was invited to most of our courses. Our objectives were to

- discuss the advantages of spacing one's children
- learn about the various methods of birth control
- dispel the myth that using birth control makes wives promiscuous

The women actually enjoyed the lessons but said that it would be difficult for them to attend 'family planning days' at their local clinic: this would be an undignified thing for a chief's wife to do. It was indeed unfortunate that during the early years the authorities thought it efficient to offer family planning services on specific days. There is not much privacy in rural areas. 'Everybody' would know whose wife was attending those lessons or availing herself of the services. And people talked.

After the FPA representative had left I spent considerable time consoling a young chief's wife who was sobbing in 'my' office (actually lent to me by a Domboshawa trainer) because she had been unable to conceive a child. Barrenness in African custom is not only a sorrow but a disgrace – and grounds for divorcing a wife. *Lobola* has to be paid back. Also, a childless person never becomes a 'full adult' and will never have great powers as a spirit after her or his death.

I assured her that the FPA also offered services to women who have difficulty conceiving. She implored me to write a letter to Spillhouse Clinic on her behalf as she was convinced that she would receive better attention

Nancy Laws

Nancy Laws was a short, rotund woman, full of fun, her hair piled up and surrounded by a tress in a rather severe but impressive hairstyle. She was the daughter of a well-known estate agent, whose firm exists to this day, and I am reminded of Nancy every time I see their advertising boards. She was not only a competent trainer, but was much liked by the participants to her courses. Nancy had a great sense of humour, always encouraged the women to believe in themselves, and had the ability to laugh at herself, as the following story she told me shows.

To ascertain women's training needs, she had travelled extensively in TTLs before my appointment. I remember our discussing the pitfalls of needing a toilet in the rural areas, where bushes to hide behind were rather rare and people seemed to be simply everywhere. 'A strong bladder should be a listed requirement for appointment to this section!' Nancy said. 'Luckily I am blessed with one.'

I myself had soon got used to the pit latrines and the hole-in-the-ground Blair toilets available in some homesteads or at council offices. Nancy could not bring herself to use them. 'Once', she recounted, 'I had already needed a toilet during the whole afternoon. Eventually it was time to go home. I drove and drove and drove. Too many homesteads, no bushes to hide behind. I was much relieved when I came to the main road in the commercial farming area. I saw a suitable culvert, got out of the car, squatted in the ditch and peed and peed. What a relief! Leisurely I pulled up my brooks, reflecting on the days' events, when a cheerful voice called out, quite near to me, "Good evening, madam!" An elderly herdsman had taken a nap in the ditch ...'

To our great distress, Nancy contracted a very aggressive form of cancer. It was my first experience of anyone dying of cancer. It caused me much sorrow and reflection as to how I would react if I was told that I had a terminal disease, or how to relate with empathy to a friend who knew she would soon have to die. As to what happens to a being after death, I found no answer.

Nancy was soon 'boarded' on medical grounds – that is, she was allowed (or asked) to retire on pension, even though she was not yet of pensionable age – by the board of government medical doctors instituted for that purpose. After she had retired for a few weeks, she asked to be allowed to help in the Section, without pay, 'to do something useful during the last months of my life, while I am still reasonably fit'. This was not permitted. I thought it exceedingly cruel, and if she had been allowed to, she could certainly have done useful work with me, even for a few hours a day on flexitime.



if backed by a government official. I made an appointment for her while she was still on the course and took her there. She conceived a child some months later!

The staff of the FPA were always very accommodating. At the request of the participants, much time was spent on discussing the menopause. Clinical information was given and superstitions concerning marital relations after menopause were dealt with humour.

A lesson on the need for veld management and the mechanics of grazing schemes – given by Mr E. Tshakalisa, the training supervisor at Conex, the Department of Conservation and Extension in the Ministry of Agriculture that serviced commercial farms – elicited much interest. Some of the older women already owned a head or two of cattle themselves. They owned at least the *mombe yeumai* ('motherhood cow') that a son-in-law traditionally has to give to the mother of his bride upon marriage. Thus they were interested in adequate grazing. The 'motherhood cow' is often the first property – apart from her cooking pots – that a wife accumulates in her own right. It has deep spiritual significance and a son-in-law dare not fail to deliver it, for, should a mother-in-law die before it is given, her spirit is guaranteed to cause havoc.

After the lesson, the chiefs' wives of Chiota TTL commented that the grazing schemes in their area were not properly run, as the paddocks were not allowed to recuperate. They did agree, though, that 'the fences help us because they mean that boys don't have to herd cattle but can go to school'.



The group defined 'progress' as follows: 'Getting new knowledge, such as the lessons we are getting at the chiefs' wives courses, and putting this knowledge into practice.' They added: 'taking part in clubs and other groups'; 'knowing how to run clubs and shows'; 'building wells and toilets to prevent diseases'; 'keeping our children clean'; 'learning to do sewing, knitting and crotchet work'; 'learning to read and write'; 'people in the area working together (*mushandira pamwe*)'. Group work on 'how we can help women in our community to progress' yielded the following statements:

- Reporting to the chief what we have learned at this course.
- Giving a good example to others by putting into practice what we have learned.
- Asking the chief to group both men and women, so that we can tell them what we have learned. When they have heard us, people can decide what they also want to learn and do.

- Asking the chief to impress on headmen, kraal heads and ordinary men that they should allow their wives to attend women's clubs.
- Asking the chief to impress on councils that they should support women's projects.
- Telling women's clubs about what we have learned.
- Meeting women who come to the chief with problems and helping him to solve these.
- Informing the chief of women's concerns if they don't come themselves.
- Informing the Women Adviser of women's problems.
- Co-operating with the Women Adviser.
- Going to hear what the District Commissioner, Agricultural Demonstrators and Health Assistants have to say (attending public meetings).



On the first day of each course, participants made suggestions as to what they would like to see on their field visit. A visit to a factory that made towels and dresses was the most popular choice. Chiefs' wives also wanted to go shopping 'in the centre of Salisbury'. Since no dress/towel factory could accommodate us on the days that I had use of the Domboshawa bus, I took the first course to Robert Mcllwaine National Park.

None of the chiefs' wives had ever been to a game park before and they had little idea of the concept of a game reserve. They were very adept, however, at spotting game and took great delight in what they saw. They had to be reminded of the names of some of the antelope, though, as game had disappeared in most TTLs. We had our picnic at Bushman's Point and I gave an impromptu lesson on 'not littering'. We took all our debris back to Domboshawa to be disposed of in dustbins.

The rest camp, at which our family had spent many a weekend and holiday, raised much interest. I was asked in detail about the facilities available, the fees charged, etc. I was also asked whether Africans were permitted to stay there. I feared that they were not, but I did not actually know and mused to myself that, should a chief or chiefs ever want to bring their families there, the Ministry of Internal Affairs would most likely have to prevail on the Department of National Parks to make an exception and provide for a block booking, keeping white visitors out. Thus I asked my charges to let me know if their families ever wanted to stay there and I would help with the booking. In practice, the question never arose.

We did go shopping in the centre of Salisbury. Having little money, they actually bought very little, but they took great delight in window shopping and in browsing in the department stores, which, they said, they would not have dared to do without my presence.

During both courses, I interviewed the participants individually about their views on polygamy. Among chiefs, the rate of polygamy was, and still is, much higher than among the general male population. I worked out from population statistics that not more than 17 per cent of African men had two or more wives. (I am not talking about mistresses, to whom the rich and powerful of today are so partial.) Among the chiefs of Mashonaland South, the polygamy rate at the time was approximately 60 per cent.

Six of the sixteen participants at the first course lived in monogamous marriages, the other ten in polygamous ones. In five of the polygamous marriages there were two wives, in the other five there were more than two. Thirteen participants were either the only wife or the senior wife in a polygamous marriage. There were only three junior wives on the course.

With one exception, the respondents – including the junior wives – were against polygamy. The exception, an elderly woman in a monogamous marriage, said: ‘I am getting old now and I am not in good health. I would be glad if a younger woman came to share the burden of work!’

Arguments against polygamy included the following:

- I do not want to share my husband with another woman!
- Husbands with several wives rarely look after each wife and each wife’s children impartially.
- They start to favour one wife and her children. Sometimes they do not send the children of all wives to school; they may buy some of them better clothes than they buy for others, and so forth. This causes bad blood between the mothers and between the children. Some children grow up to hate the woman who was favoured over their own mother – even that woman’s children. This can cause problems in families even after the husband has died.
- If there is too much work to be done in the husband’s fields, the husband can hire labour!

The three junior wives on the course concurred with the above views. Two of them said that they had had little choice about becoming a junior wife, as their marriage was arranged by their parents. The third said that she had been a bit naive when she was courted; she had simply been pleased about becoming the wife of a chief.

On the second course, half of the participants were junior wives in

polygamous marriages. Their views were similar to those expressed above. Again, there was only one – a senior wife – who had a positive attitude towards polygamy. She confided during the interview that she had never liked her husband very much and that it was actually she who had proposed that he take a second wife. ‘Now I don’t have to share his sleeping mat so often and I have far less work’, she said, with a twinkle in her eyes.

All the chiefs’ wives concurred that if, a course at Domboshawa was offered, the place must be offered to the *vahosi* (the senior wife) out of respect. If she was too frail to go or if she did not want to go, it must be she – not the chief – who decides which wife will go in her place. This presented me with a slight problem, as Internal Affairs protocol required me to address the invitation letter to the chief. Which wife the chief would send would have to remain an internal family matter.

During the course evaluation I always asked what else course participants wanted to learn. In my experience, the less exposure they had had, the fewer their ideas or requests. Thus this group voiced only the following two wishes:

- Field visits to see community projects in action.
- A flip in an aeroplane.



In June I myself had my first ride in an ADF aeroplane. A Cessna was proceeding to Gokwe to conduct an inspection of soil erosion; there was room for me and the pilot was happy to drop me off and collect me at the Sanyati Mission airstrip. This gave me the opportunity to visit Women Adviser Mrs Bertha Chida and to re-establish contact with the mission. Dr and Mrs Monroe invited us to have our meeting in their dining room and gave us lunch. I could see that Mrs Chida was a very welcome guest there. I always thought that the Women’s Section should have closer liaison with missions but never took the time to establish that many contacts.

Mrs Chida, a mature woman and one of the Section’s early appointees, again brought to my attention that people in Chief Neuso’s area wanted literacy classes. Thus we planned to invite an ALOR representative to speak to a meeting at Chief Neuso’s *dare* (court or meeting-place). The DC, councillors of Neuso Council, Community Advisers and other extension workers, as well as the general public, were to be invited. DC Anthony Cozens supported the proposal and the meeting was accordingly scheduled for 11 September. Although it took place and much interest was created, regrettably the council never took up the challenge of sponsoring an adult literacy project.

At the end of 1972, ALOR had sent a circular to all councils, stating its objectives and mode of operation and inviting councils to sponsor the training and employment of Adult Literacy Teachers. It appeared to me that, in Mashonaland South, councils had not seriously discussed the proposals – at least, they had not discussed them with the people in their areas of jurisdiction. In my view, the sponsoring of ALOR's adult literacy programmes could be financed beneficially by councils as a service to the community.

On reflection, a concerted two-pronged approach would have been needed: firstly, educating councils, through regional council officers and Community Advisers, as to their potential role in establishing literacy programmes with the help of ALOR, and secondly, educating women through Women Advisers how to lobby councils to provide this service.

Early in 1974, I decided to include the topic of adult literacy projects in the HEDs and chiefs' wives courses and in the Women Advisers refresher at the end of the year. In April 1974, ALOR held one of its two-week refresher courses for the then thirty-four literacy instructors in its rural functional literacy programmes established in a number of provinces with the organization's own funding. I was invited to give a talk on the role of the Women's Section and of Women Advisers. My session was received with much interest and resulted in closer co-operation between Women Advisers and Adult Literacy Teachers.

ALOR had introduced a five-year integrated functional literacy project in several provinces, sponsored by an overseas non-governmental

ALOR: The Adult Literacy Organization of Rhodesia

Adult literacy was a burning interest of mine, as well as a need often expressed by women I met. Back in the early 1960s I had helped to implement the Adult Literacy Campaign, which grew out of the Courtesy Campaign (an attempt to improve race relations, initiated by white middle-class women), and I had even held classes in the thatched hut that Rolf and his father had built for this purpose in our garden in Glen Carron Avenue.

With the arrival of two American experts – Helen Roberts and Alice Sanderson – the enthusiastically but loosely organized campaign was transformed by adopting a more systematically structured approach, and eventually the Adult Literacy Organization of Rhodesia was formed.

After working on the Campaign for some time as a volunteer, and helping to set up ALOR, I decided that, if I wanted to play a significant part in the development of the African people, I first needed to develop myself. Thus I embarked on studying for a social science degree through UNISA (the University of South Africa), the first distance-education university in southern Africa.

organization called KED.² Its aim was not only to teach reading, writing and basic arithmetic but to integrate literacy with several other aspects of a development programme in such a way that literacy would substantially improve their students' way of living, health, agricultural success and their participation in the cash economy. Literacy provided the base, savings clubs the means of harnessing the little income the students had already; later, chicken-rearing was introduced as a means of generating additional income.

Savings clubs were very popular, especially with women. The concept was first introduced by the Catholic missionary Brother Francis, Waddilove, in 1963. By now the Savings Club Development Movement had been formed. Savings clubs enabled members to save very small amounts of money, agreeing to bring a specific amount on certain days. The treasurer recorded each individual's contribution with a stamp system, thus members did not need to be literate to know at any time the amount of credit each had with the group. The total sum saved by the club was banked, usually with the Post Office Savings Bank, the most accessible bank in rural areas, and thus earned interest. No bank would have accepted the small amounts that an individual could save. Often the members bought farming inputs with the savings as a group, but individuals could also draw the money they had paid in for school fees or other needs. Some groups gave credit in emergencies. In my experience, women usually chose widows as treasurers 'because there will be no husband who can pressurize her to give him an unwarranted loan'.

After students had graduated from the first stage of the literacy programme, they were encouraged to remain in groups in which follow-up readers on health and farming topics produced by ALOR were read and discussed. To reinforce learning, agricultural and health extension staff were invited to give lessons.

Basic numeracy was expanded to the keeping of farm and savings club records, and literacy was expanded into reading and following written instructions. For example, instructions on fertilizer bags became 'follow-up reading material' and recipes for using vegetables and eggs were used and recorded. Such activities ensured that the hard-won reading and writing skills were not lost through lack of use.

On 7 and 8 May, I visited the functional literacy programme in Wedza TTL, together with two of the three local Women Advisers, Mrs Goto and Mrs Chitumba (Mrs Sakuringwa did not receive my letter in time).

² I have been unable to establish what KED stood for, but it was an overseas organization. ALOR was not keen that one mentioned any overseas funding, as this might embarrass the donor and jeopardize the funding, as granting funds to an organization in Rhodesia was regarded by some as 'sanctions busting'.

Colleen Goto, with her open regular features and even temperament, had been appointed to the Dendenyore area of Wedza TTL in 1969. She was married to Cleopas Makanza Goto, a councillor of the Wedza Council. Her daughter Lillian remembers:

We lived in Makanza kraal, about 6km south-west of St Anne's Mission. Our headman was James Makanza Goto, my paternal grandfather's half-brother, who is still the headman today. Our home was built at the foot of a mountain.

There was a traditional round kitchen hut and a sky-blue three-bedroomed house with a combined lounge-dining room, furnished with a black three-piece lounge suite with red seats and a rustic dining-room table with six chairs.

Her divorced colleague, Margaret Chitumba, was appointed to Upper Wedza in 1970. She showed her lively, self-confident personality when she applied for the job. The DC had assembled the applicants in his office and, by way of an interview, made them all write an essay on their life so far and why they wanted to be Women Advisers. Margaret Chitumba wrote at length about her having been a keen long-distance runner while still at school, conveying with gusto the exhilaration of a young girl who is running alone, outdistancing everyone. She was honest enough to say that the main reason why she wanted to become a Women Adviser was because she wanted to be independent and provide well for her children, though did add that she wanted to see all women progress.

At the time of my visit in 1974 she lived with her three children Penelope (17), David (14) and Herbert (12) at her late father's homestead. Marriages of sons being patri-local, her brothers and half-brothers lived in the same kraal with their wives and children. Margaret Chitumba recounted in 2013:

When I returned to my parents' home with three very young children twelve years earlier after divorcing my husband,³ I had no land of my own. First I worked on my parents' fields to contribute to our upkeep and later I also worked as a temporary teacher.

One day a widow we knew, who lived with her widowed mother and brothers, was told by her brother that she was not wanted there any more and that she must return to her former husband's home.

I was afraid that that could happen to me. My father was

³ Although, according to tradition, the children born in a marriage in which *lobola* has been paid belong to the husband's family, Mrs Chitumba had been awarded custody of her children at the DC's court until they were seven years of age. A statute law had been passed to this effect.

already late [deceased] by then. I confided my fears to my mother. She said: 'Yes, it could happen. Your brother David is the kraal head now and he can make such a decision.'

But I was fortunate. My brother gave me a piece of land (about one acre). I hired people to mould bricks and built a house. When I was working as a Women Adviser I ploughed the land I had been given with the help of hired workers. Since I now also had monthly wages, my children and I were never a burden to my brothers.

To return to our visit to the literacy project in Wedza: The country was blessed with an exceptionally prolonged rainy season. It is the only time I can remember driving in pouring rain during the month of May. We got thoroughly stuck in the mud with my Renault 6 more than once, and we were pretty muddy from extracting my car by the time we arrived at the several localities at which beginners' or follow-up classes were being held. Attendance at the classes was understandably somewhat diminished on account of the rain, but nevertheless we had the opportunity to watch tuition in progress and to hold discussions with students and teachers.

At Rambanapasi we watched Mrs Zimuto – formerly a women's club leader and HED, who trained as a Literacy Teacher in 1973 – competently teach Lesson 36 of the reading primer and lessons in basic arithmetic. Familiar with the process, I could satisfy myself that the students had assimilated the lessons taught to date. They could write the words taught so far from memory. Their teacher taught three classes with fourteen participants each, two of whom met twice a week and one even three times. She was also assisting nine savings clubs that had been initiated as part of the programme. A number of literacy students participated in both, some also in women's clubs.

At Matsine – where all the literacy students belonged to an Apostolic church and donned their white *vapostori* garments when coming to class – we were invited to look at the chicken runs that advanced learners had established. I was impressed with their cleanliness. In every run, the chickens were provided with shade, water and commercial food. Their manure was used in the vegetable garden. 'I have learned all this from reading a book', said one of the owners proudly. Project members had surplus eggs for sale, and I was given some to take home to remember my visit by.

The Literacy Teacher, Lilian Kamanga, whose training had originally been sponsored by FAWC in 1972, had both men and women in her group. This was unusual, as it is more difficult for men than it is for women to swallow their pride and admit to the world that they are illiterate and 'go

to school like a child'. Some of her students were also members of savings clubs and other interest groups. Mrs Kamanga had taught her advanced students how to keep farm records and household records. The Women Advisers thought the keeping of such financial records such useful skills that they wanted them included in their own refresher course. Mrs Goto arranged for private tuition by the literacy teacher in farm record keeping.

At Sango school, near St Paul's Mission, we met Literacy Teacher Gertude Ndhlovu and her beginners' class, only recently started. She also taught two 'follow-up' groups, who had passed the first examination at which they were declared 'literate in Shona'. They were now being taught to use their basic literacy and numeracy skills by participating in other development groups and programmes – for example, by attending the Agricultural Demonstrator's lessons. His written handouts were read and discussed together with other instructional literature during their advanced reading lessons. Mrs Ndhlovu hoped that her students would pass the advanced tests and then be presented with 'functional literacy certificates' at a ceremony to be held in August.

I left the project convinced that the project's objectives were in the process of being achieved. I also noted with great interest that the graduates were being inspired to stay in 'follow-up classes' – integrated with income-generating projects and women's club activities – for long enough to avoid the danger of them relapsing into illiteracy.

We had lunch at Women Adviser Goto's home. Her husband received us very courteously but then went out on business 'so as not to disturb us'. The Gotos had three children at the time, Lillian (9), Lloyd (7) and Langton (2). Her daughter, now Lillian Murwisi, recounted in 2013:

I remember your visits to our home. There was always a throng of children gathering and we all accompanied you to the car. Visits by a white person were, of course, a rarity in those days, so they evoked a lot of curiosity. My friends used to ask me afterwards, 'Who was that?' 'What did she do at your home?' 'Is she nice?' 'Does she eat sadza [the staple maize-meal 'porridge']?' 'Have you touched her hair?' We always had a special meal when you came and we ate together at the table with our best table manners, of which we were reminded before you came. Normally it was 'Take your food and scamper!'

I might add that Mrs Goto always asked me beforehand to encourage her two older children to work hard at school!

Another functional literacy project in the province was implemented in Mudzi District under the auspices of Dendera mission, headed by Esther and William Finster. When visiting the project for the first time on 27 May

1974, I was invited to attend the graduation ceremony of the first students who had become basically literate on 1 July. It was held at Nyamaruka. I was delighted to meet up there with Janet Gwanzura (formerly Matema).

I will mention here that Janet Matema was the first African woman I met who completely rejected the traditional notion that a husband is entitled to beat his wife 'moderately' to discipline her 'when necessary'. She took the consequences when she experienced violence at his hands for the first time. Matema had beaten her so severely that it took her three weeks to fully recover and for all the bruises to disappear. In Matema's view, his wife had become insufferably independent because, thanks to her training and appointment as an Adult Literacy Teacher, she now had more education than he did, as well as an independent income. Thus, in his own words, she had to be 'put in her place' to remind her that 'women are under men'. Janet reclaimed her self-respect by divorcing him. As was the norm in Shona society, she reverted to her maiden name, Gwanzura.

The graduation ceremony had been minutely planned and probably extensively rehearsed as regards timing. I noted with surprise that the official programme – typed out – was to run from 09.10 to 13.18. It started promptly at 09.10 and ended at 13.22. I had never experienced such time-keeping in a rural area before!

ALOR always made such graduation ceremonies into a public-relations exercise. One of their main intentions was to encourage other illiterates who had been sceptical about the project, or were not yet brave enough, to join classes. It did indeed require courage to do so. Illiterates were often plagued by nagging doubts: What if I am too old to learn to read and write? What if I am not clever enough? Some were ridiculed for 'going to school like a child'; others were scolded for 'neglecting their husband and children and their work in the fields' by doing so. Men were, of course, not accused of neglecting their wife and children if they went to school, but they found it harder on their pride than women to admit to their illiteracy so publicly.

At these ceremonies, graduates had the opportunity to demonstrate to the public that they had indeed learned to read and write. This was done in this way: Cards with random syllables (Shona is a syllabic language) were displayed on a flannel graph. Members of the public were invited to call out words that they could see could be constructed from the syllables. In response a student picked up the relevant syllable cards and constructed the words on another flannel graph. The process was repeated with a further flannel graph displaying word cards. A member of the public could call out a sentence that could be constructed with said words. A student picked up the relevant cards and constructed the sentence. Later a

member of the public was invited to choose any paragraph in one of the primers. The graduates found the page and read out this paragraph as a group to assembled guests. The ability to write was also demonstrated by a student writing a simple letter, complete with date, on a chalk



With Janet Gwanzura at the Dendera Literacy Shelter

board. A few sums, including an addition, a subtraction, a multiplication and a division exercise using figures up to 100, could be called out by a member of the public. Students in turn wrote the sum on the chalkboard and worked it out.

These demonstrations required courage from the newly literate but the onlookers declared themselves duly satisfied by spontaneous exclamations of surprise and praise. A few brave graduates then gave speeches in which they recounted what it had been like to be illiterate, mentioning embarrassing incidents that they would never have to suffer again. A story often told by people at such ceremonies was their attempt to hide their illiteracy by holding their Bible open when a passage was being read out in church and how embarrassing it was when someone loudly pointed out that they were holding it upside down.

On this day, a woman told us what an ordeal it had been to return home after a visit to Salisbury if she was not accompanied by someone who could read. Since she could not read, she had no idea which bus to board at the busy and congested long-distance bus terminus to take her to Mudzi. When she asked a bystander to help her find it, he would usually say 'the destination is written on the notice board in the bus window. Just look around!' When she confessed that she could not read, she would often get a derisive comment: 'Where were you when others went to school?'

As the ceremony came to an end, a prominent local businessman, Adam Foya, spontaneously donated \$20 to the project as a token of appreciation of what had been achieved. A few other well-wishers followed suit with the small amounts they could afford. Such symbolic gestures were common in TTLs and always provided much encouragement. Singing and dancing, and a very modest feast, usually followed the graduation

ceremony. The morning at Nyamaruka was enjoyed by all and caused much discussion in the villages.

A few further observations deserve mention: Literacy students themselves had constructed simple 'literacy shelters' from poles and corrugated iron, hessian grain bags or with walls of thatching grass, in which the classes were held. Mostly there were no chairs or benches, though in some instances well-wishers or a school lent a few items of furniture. These often had to be carried there before and brought back after lessons.

One family consisting of mother, father and adult daughter had attended classes together. Mother and daughter graduated together, the father, who had had to miss some classes owing to other pressing business, was hoping to graduate with the next batch of students.



Then I turned my attention to civic affairs. In my annual report for 1973 I had mentioned the widespread lack of knowledge of the structure and functions of African Councils among women and their many complaints that 'councils do not support women'.

During my January tour to help Women Advisers plan the focus of their work for the year we had discussed this problem. Women Advisers claimed that they sometimes invited Community Advisers to give lessons on community development and councils to women. They invited them in order to demonstrate their willingness to co-operate with their male colleagues, and to give them access to women's groups. However, the Women Advisers also reported that women usually said that they did not understand the Community Adviser's lesson on councils. (I could not establish why this should be so.) They also felt that, if they themselves gave such lessons, Community Advisers would feel that they were trespassing into their area of responsibility and competence. I assured them that giving lessons on these topics was indeed part of their role also, as the Women's Section was charged with 'involving women in civic affairs'.

I resolved in the first instance to include this topic in the Women Advisers' refresher course to improve their knowledge and skills, but also to give the matter as to who should best give this civic-affairs training further attention. It would be impolitic for us women to barge into what was locally regarded as a male domain.

In the meantime the need to give increased attention to problems in 'sensitive areas' became pressing.



On 1 July 1974, the beginning of the new financial year, the former two provinces of Mashonaland North and South were divided into three: Mashonaland West, Central and East. Additional offices were rented, office furnishings bought, and stationery and travel and subsistence allowances provided for. Staff in other sections of the ministry were promoted and appointed to the newly available provincial posts. However, an additional PCDOW post had not been provided for, so both Dorianne Graham-Jolly and I served the same working areas as before the division¹ – but acquired an additional Provincial Commissioner to report to!

I retained Lionel Leach as PC in Mashonaland East and, from now on, Dorianne and I ‘shared’ Keith C. Bloore, who was PC Mashonaland West. However, because she was housed in the Mashonaland West office (while also looking after some districts in Mashonaland Central), Dee had far more contact with Keith Bloore than I did.



On 30 July 1974, another general election took place. The Rhodesia Front retained all fifty parliamentary seats elected on the European voters’ roll. I had not really expected anything else, but I was, nevertheless, bitterly disappointed.

Overtly, and in my mind, ‘the war’ was still confined to Mashonaland Central. Some Protected Villages had already been established in this province (Sowe and Mukumbura in the Zambezi valley), but the government’s villagization programme was now put into top gear. During July, August and September, the entire populations of Chiweshe and Madziwa TTLs would be relocated in an effort to deny the insurgents access to the civilian population – to their ‘hearts and minds’ and to their food and shelter.² The massive logistics involved in these moves – dubbed Operation Overload (Chiweshe) and Operation Stronghold (Shamva) – are described by Nick Baalbergen, a 21-year-old member of the administrative staff of Internal Affairs, called up for national service, who took part in

¹ I will therefore continue to refer to Mashonaland South on occasion in what follows.

² In Chiweshe TTL (Mazoe District) an estimated number of 47,000 people were moved into twenty-one PVs, and in Madziwa TTL (Shamva District) an estimated number of 13,500 were moved into ten PVs.

Protected Villages

The concept of Protected Villages had been taken from the wars fought by the British in Malaya against the military wing of the Malayan Communist Party and later that of the Americans against the communist Viet Cong during the Vietnam War. During these wars civilians were moved into fortified villages that could be guarded around the clock and the people thus separated from the guerrillas in order to counteract Mao Zedong's precept that 'the guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea'.

Similarly, in Rhodesia the idea of Protected Villages was to separate the civil population from the enemy, to deny the latter food, shelter and the opportunity to indoctrinate the people, and to achieve better surveillance of the civil population; but it was also to give them protection from the witch-hunts and executions that the guerrillas also committed to get the people 'on side'.

both exercises.³ However, the war was certainly simmering covertly in the northern parts of Mashonaland East. Preparations for Consolidated Villages and Protected Villages – soon dubbed CVs and PVs – were being made in both Mudzi District and in the northern part of Mrewa District.⁴ In the Mkota/Gorongwa area of Mudzi, the people were being 'moved inwards' in preparation for the establishment of a cordon sanitaire to interrupt the infiltration routes.⁵

In time, the cordon sanitaire stretched from Mashonaland Central into Manicaland – the Nehanda, Chaminuka, Takawira and Chitepo sectors. Within Mudzi District it became a very clearly demarcated area, which followed the international border as closely as possible and was fenced both towards Mozambique and Rhodesia. On the Rhodesian side, notices in both Shona and English were attached to the wires warning people of mines within the fences. Since the border was closed, the fence enclosed the entire border crossing, both the tarred road and the immigration and customs office. A 'no go area' of various widths stretched along the fence, allowing for unhindered military operations. Anyone found within it was taken to be an armed insurgent.

The insurgents had thoroughly infiltrated more and more areas, and were holding all-night *pungwes* – regarded as either 'indoctrination meetings' or 'conscientization meetings'



³ Nick Baalbergen, 'Operation Overload', *Rhodesia – Intaf* <<http://www.freewebs.com/dudleywall/opoverload.htm>>, and 'Operation Stronghold', *Rhodesia – Intaf* <<http://www.freewebs.com/dudleywall/opstronghold.htm>>.

⁴ A Consolidated Village was termed as such until a perimeter fence turned it into a Protected Village.

⁵ See map on pages

Caught between two sides

As in all civil wars, the civilian population was caught between the two warring armies. Considerable violence was being inflicted on them – by the insurgents and the Rhodesian armed forces alike.

A mild example: The former gardener of a District Commissioner, a very old man, did not go to a *pungwe* because he felt he could not stay awake for a whole night. The insurgents found out and burned down his hut and granary. He lost all his belongings and food stores.

The children of the District Commissioner, who had liked the old man very much, prevailed on their parents to give him new blankets, clothes, mealie meal (ground maize) and other basic items – which, of course, they did. He rebuilt his home, and did go to the next *pungwe*. The security forces came to the area, interrogated him, and he admitted having gone to the *pungwe* and not having reported the *vakomana*'s presence in the area. The soldiers burned down his home, with all his belongings.

according to one's point of view. Voluntarily or otherwise, people had been harbouring and feeding small groups of insurgents in their homes, and people – particularly women and young girls – had been feeding them, carrying hot, cooked food in pots on their heads to their hidden camps.

The entire population of a specified area was moved into a PV or CV, usually swiftly on one or more appointed days. The people had no choice in the matter. Families were ordered by the army or by Internal Affairs to pack up all their belongings and food stores and to salvage as much building material from their homes as they wished. Transport was made available for a specified number of days only. The homes they left behind were usually burned by the Rhodesian security forces, so that they could not be used by the enemy as shelter.⁶

In the PV/CV people had to build new homes, collecting poles, clay and thatching grass from the surrounds, and/or bringing salvaged materials from their old homes. Until the new homes were built they camped in the open. Families were settled in close proximity to each other, on stands of about 15×20 metres, often into huge villages with a population of around 2,000 people, sometimes more. Where the terrain and water supplies did not allow this, they might be smaller. In Mtoko District, for example, Chitekwe PV had only around 700 inhabitants.

Kraals usually stayed together, but, while households under the jurisdiction of a kraal head had previously usually lived in scattered hamlets with their fields near their homesteads, they now lived in close proximity

⁶ Bruce Moore-King, *White Man, Black War* (Harare: Baobab, 1998), 6–13.

- 'like in townships', they said. Chiefs and headmen moved into the PVs at the same time as their people, with their own kraal. The village was enclosed within a guarded perimeter fence with one guarded entrance/exit gate. For this reason people sometimes referred to themselves as 'living behind the wire'.

In the middle of the PV was the Keep - the quarters of the village administration and village defence, surrounded by a protective earth embankment and with a guarded entrance gate. Septic tanks and soak-aways were provided for the Keep, and water and cooking facilities were laid on. The people soon came to call PVs and CVs 'Keeps'. Usually, at least at the beginning of the programme, fence and Keep were erected before the population was moved. Sometimes the fence had to wait, owing to logistics or lack of funds. The cost of constructing a PV and its Keep was at the time in the region of \$30,000.

Obviously these enforced moves caused considerable trauma to the people affected, people already traumatized by the war. Most families still used their old fields, which were now often a considerable distance away from the Keep. They were allowed out only when Keep commanders, advised by the security forces, permitted it. The PV's gates were often locked for days. A curfew was imposed from sunrise to sunset, during which time no-one was allowed to leave. People were forbidden to take food to the fields in case they passed it on to the insurgents. Sometimes cattle were corralled just outside the perimeter fence and were allowed



Living behind the wire

to be herded out for grazing at the army's discretion. In other PVs they remained corralled at the previous locations, where they often broke free.

Water for the people was often, though by no means always, provided from the start – in huge tanks, filled by means of pumps, sometimes from sources a long distance away. However, there was usually no provision for sanitation until the people dug latrines themselves, so conditions could be very unhygienic during the first weeks.

Where possible, existing schools and clinics were enclosed within a PV, but a PV's location depended mainly on the availability of water. In addition, arable land had to be reasonably nearby. If a school had not been enclosed within the PV, regular attendance by the children was not possible. Sometimes a school was built inside the PV in due course, usually from materials salvaged from the old school. A visit to a clinic in many cases involved a journey through zones declared no-go areas and thus had to be postponed for days.



An aerial view of a Protected Village in Mudzi District

**The entrance gate
at a Mudzi PV**



I tried to assemble population statistics via the field workers, who should have got them from the Keep commanders. However, the figures produced by the workers were suspect – for example, for the number of ‘under-fives’ or teenagers – and consequently I could not rely on them for planning purposes. One of the problems was that the categories of ‘adult’ and ‘children’ were not adequately defined, and age categories, however broad, were apparently not used when Keep commanders collected the data. Thus only the figures for ‘adult men’ and ‘adult women’, denoting married men and women and previously married household heads with children, were probably accurate, as these were required for the allocation of stands.

What was obvious, even to the casual observer, was that women and children predominated in the populations of PVs and CVs. In the districts I worked in, there was also a fair proportion of middle-aged to elderly men. In the more remote areas of the country not as many men had gone to work in towns as was the case in less remote TTLs. But some very young men had already crossed the border and joined the liberation armies. More followed. Some young girls also did so. There were also some families with members on both sides of the conflict – again, probably fewer than in other districts. Visitors were allowed, but visits from men working in town, or from other parts of the country, became sparser as road blocks increased and public transport became scarce because of land mines.

By separating the civilian population from the terrorists it was also hoped that they would be protected from the violence inflicted by both sides, that a ‘clean’ war could then be waged between opposing factions in the cleared areas, and the insurgents more easily defeated.

To administer the village, and to protect it, each PV was initially staffed by two armed white national servicemen – though sometimes there was only one – in charge of twenty-five armed black District Security Assistants (DSAs). For some of the Keep commanders – some as young as eighteen years old – this station was their first experience of a TTL and of the rural black population. It was, within a war situation, an isolating, frightening experience. Initially these young men were also looked down upon by their peers in the fighting forces as, in their view, they had been put there as a ‘soft option’, not being physically fit for active service for one reason or another. Others, though, consciously chose this service, because they did not want to kill. Some did sterling work. Some cracked.

It was no ‘soft option’. In a personal e-mail message, Rob McIntosh – of national servicemen intake 151 (February 1976) and transferred to Internal Affairs mid-year – listed the many defensive and offensive operations he was involved in during his subsequent call-ups. In time, with the formation

of the Guard Force, older men were stationed in these posts.⁷ A quite 'macho' advertisement appeared in the press recruiting men for service in the PVs.⁸

While some people in some areas were glad to be removed from intimidation from both sides, the PVs were generally resented. Later, many were infiltrated anyway, and the people again had to cope with both armies. Just as it was 'outside', both sides also had their informers within the PVs.



The role of Women Advisers had been conceived during the 1960s, during times of normality. Women Advisers had encouraged women to form various types of interest groups and had helped the established ones with organizational challenges and planning. Women's organizations had sent their own trainers into the rural areas to conduct courses on homecraft and health matters, and both they and our Section trained many women's club members to teach homecraft skills on a voluntary basis. Hence Women Advisers were expressly forbidden to teach domestic skills themselves. Interest groups had multiplied and Women Advisers worked mainly through groups. Above all, there had been peace.

By now the situation that rural women found themselves in had drastically changed. Women's organizations no longer sent trainers to areas of war. Interest groups collapsed, voluntary workers went underground. Women were preoccupied with issues of survival. With the move into PVs and CVs, their lives had been subjected to turmoil. And with so many people living so close together, matters of health, environmental hygiene and nutrition became matters of concern.

The women of Mudzi and Mtoko districts, and of the Uzumba/Maramba areas of Mrewa District, that we worked with had been relatively unsophisticated compared to those of, say, Wedza, Marandellas and Goromonzi districts. I became acutely aware that up to now I had met with 'the cream' – the women who wanted to progress into a more modern way of life than their mothers had known, and who organized themselves with much vigour to achieve their shared aims. They were also intensely interested in civic affairs and attended Local Government Awareness training in great numbers. In these operational areas, ravaged

⁷ 'The Guard Force was created in 1975 as a "Fourth Arm" with the responsibility for manning protected villages', Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia, 1965–1980* (Marshalltown: Sygma/Collins, 1982), 28.

⁸ See Julie Frederikse, *None but Ourselves* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1982), 89.

by war, I met a more 'average' cross-section of rural women, including the far less 'progress-minded'. The illiteracy rate was high. Understandably, all were focused on survival.

In these areas, comparatively fewer women's clubs and other women's interest groups had been formed than in 'advanced' districts before the advent of war. Not many voluntary workers had been trained to teach in women's clubs and few club members had attended courses of any description. These areas had also been relatively poorly serviced by our Section, the three Women Advisers having had to attend to very extensive areas.⁹ This was only slowly being rectified by the stationing of four more Women Advisers in 1974, 1975 and 1976.

We now had to focus on basics: sanitation, the prevention of disease, nutrition, and simple homecraft skills. A new type of fieldworker was needed to work with women and teenage girls in profoundly different circumstances from those that any of us in the Women's Section had experienced before, officers and Women Advisers alike.

Wyn Wilson prepared to get the Section more appropriately involved in the war areas. On 28 August 1974, an advertisement appeared in the *African Times*. The term 'Protected Village' was not used in it, but this is where the Development Workers were being recruited for, so their job description was very different from that of a Women Adviser. In practice, the Development Worker was primarily a homecraft skills trainer. She would certainly use non-directive community development methods to help women organize themselves into interest groups.

Initially, though, the Development Worker had to respond to the PV women's most pressing needs and wants. Furthermore, teaching sanitation and environmental hygiene was necessary to prevent and combat diseases in the villages. Lessons on nutrition were needed to prevent and cure malnutrition among young

Ministry of Internal Affairs Vacancies

Women Development Workers

THE Ministry of Internal Affairs is recruiting single women to work as Development Workers in the remote rural areas of Rhodesia.

Applicants should be over 21 years of age and have Grade 7 education or better and be Shona-speaking.

Successful applicants will be required to attend a two-month course before being posted to a remote area.

Development workers will be required to work with women's groups, teaching homecraft skills and family care.

Only women without immediate family responsibilities will be considered. Salary will be \$35,00 – \$40,00 per month, depending on qualifications.

Single accommodation will be provided.

Applications giving details of age, education and working experience should be made before September 10, 1974 to:

*The Senior Community Development Officer (Women),
Private Bag 7702,
Causeway, Rhodesia.*

⁹ Mrs I. Gurupira, appointed in 1969, and Mrs N. Chitekwe, appointed in 1970, were the first Women Advisers to be stationed in Mtoko District, which then incorporated Mudzi as well.

children, particularly kwashiorkor, caused by protein deficiency in their diet. Helping mothers to grow vegetables was important for adequate nutrition. The Development Worker also needed to respond to the expressed needs of older teenage girls, most of whom did not attend school.

Umbrella organizations of women's clubs and other voluntary organizations would not and could not venture into the PVs. We could expect that women wanted to learn to knit and sew, to make articles for their own families and possibly for sale – some sooner, others later. This felt need was to be met as soon as it was expressed.



At Head Office a new officer, Penny Ross, was hired in September 1974 as assistant to Miss Wilson. Penny was very tall and very, very slim, resolute, with a radiant smile, her black hair teased into an extraordinary Afro-bouffant style and sporting a carefully cultivated tan. She was divorced with a ten-year-old daughter, Shelley. Doriennne, Penny and I soon became close friends.

Young black women often aspired to employment, certainly in the towns, but in rural areas many of those who had been to school did so too. The unemployment rate was high among job-seekers, and employment opportunities for women were particularly scarce. This may have been the main reason why the response to the advertisement was immense. It fell to Penny to make the initial selection of Development Workers, and in 2011 she still remembered it well:

I do recall the thousands of applications that came through the post and sifting through them to choose those seemingly suitable for short-listing for an interview. Fortunately, Wyn Wilson endorsed most of them, so seemed happy giving me various responsibilities with regard to their training, welfare, assessing their potential, and with my giving recommendations on posting, etc.

Penny was also to take charge of the Development Workers' training, and the first group, probably twenty, went for their initial training at Domboshawa during the last quarter of 1974. Penny spent most of her time at the centre, in the classroom, with the trainees, and thus developed an intimate knowledge of their personalities, formed close relationships, and knew what each individual's capabilities were. There was much stress on 'working with people', on gaining acceptability, on using non-directive community development methods, on preventing diseases and on nutrition. Various homecraft skills were thoroughly taught. Doriennne

and I were privileged to be stationed in Salisbury and thus to be able to observe some of the initial training. I remember the contented hum in the classroom when all were busy with needlework, with Penny (the course co-ordinator) sitting among them in quiet conversation.



While tens of thousands of people in the Chiweshe and Madziwa TTLs were being moved into Protected Villages, and while Development Workers were being recruited and trained, I could still operate quite normally in most areas of Mashonaland South. On 1 July 1974, four new Women Advisers were posted to districts in the province: Mrs Lydia Psuura, Mudzi District (Nyamukoho, Mkota), a 'sensitive area'; Mrs Perpetua Muguto, Goromonzi District (Chikwakwa, Rusike, Shangure); Mrs Jane Mapininga, Gatooma District (Ngezi); Mrs Rachel M'pakaviri, Hartley District (Mondoro North). This brought my complement of field workers to seventeen. I was delighted. Some of the work areas covered by Women Advisers in these districts had simply been too big. When Women Adviser Chibisa was appointed to Mudzi in December, I became responsible for eighteen staff.

Lydia Psuura was the wife of a teacher, an outgoing, friendly and competent woman and a mother of several children. We had experienced great difficulty finding a candidate with Standard 6 education in the area in which an additional Women Adviser was needed. Thus we departed from the policy of not selecting wives of civil servants liable to transfer. Her husband was employed at a primary school in his home area, where the couple also cultivated his land, thus he was less likely to ask for a transfer than other teachers. This possibility had been discussed with him and he had stated emphatically that he had no desire to move out of his home area.

Each new Women Adviser was always introduced, usually by Wyn Wilson, to the tribal leaders and the people among whom she was going to work at an official ceremony, during which her role was carefully explained. We travelled to Mudzi station together on 3 July 1974, where we met the DC, Charles Collett, who drove us to the Ngarwe Council Hall, where the ceremony took place. Wyn Wilson introduced Lydia Psuura, the first Women Adviser for the new Mudzi District, to Chief Nyamukoho and his wife, to his headmen and the several kraal heads present, to the councillors, and to the people of Ngarwe TTL. At the same time, Norah Chitekwe, who was from now on to confine herself to her work area in Mtoko District, bade her official farewell to people whom she had only



Official introduction of Mrs Lydia Psuura to the people in her work area, 3 July 1974.
Left to right: Charles W. Collett (DC Mudzi), Chief Nyamukoho, Lydia Psuura,
Norah Chitekwe, Mrs Nyamukoho (Chief's wife), me, Wyn Wilson

occasionally been able to visit, owing to the very large area she had to attempt to cover.

Miss Wilson and I spent the night at Mtoko Hotel in order to meet Noel Hunt, the Deputy Secretary (Development) for Internal Affairs, the next day, who was to install Chief Chikwizo in a different part of the district. Taking part in this important occasion would give us a chance to see an area that neither of us had hitherto visited, to meet some women at the gathering, and possibly make a lightning assessment of their needs.

The Mtoko Hotel was always an adventure. Already about thirty years old, the small hotel, three storeys high, somewhat dilapidated and painted bright blue, stood in the middle of the village on a dusty mound and displayed a sign: 'All Rooms Facing the Sea'. There was hardly a pretence at a garden.

It was run by Jimmy Christian, a highly eccentric man who sported a pitch-black toupee and owned two vintage Rolls-Royces that he kept polished so highly that they shone like mirrors in the sun. He showed them off in the village from time to time by driving them up and down the main road, but otherwise did not use them. He did not particularly like guests to stay in his hotel, and you had to court his favour to be allowed to continue frequenting it, even though there was no other hotel to which you could have transferred your custom. If you wanted dinner there, you had to book in advance. Even the DC knew that he would not be served as a casual guest.

Jim Christian displayed a selection of rare drinks in his bar – on a shelf backed by a mirror – which, in this time of sanctions, was very impressive and talked about throughout the province. However, he allowed you to buy one of his remarkable drinks only if he liked you, so he did not sell many. He did not keep his hotel open in the evening at the pleasure of his guests, not even up to a predictable closing time. When he had had enough, he simply turned off the generator and went home. More than once I found myself in the bath tub – there was no such luxury as an en suite bathroom – when he turned off the lights, so I had to find the way to my bed by the light of a torch.

On that particular evening, though, he was in a good mood and offered both Wyn Wilson and me an Irish Mist each. However, enough is enough, and he turned the generator off soon after we had savoured it.



Deputy Secretary Noel Hunt and Provincial Commissioner Bob Woollacott, were expected at 9.00a.m. sharp the next day.

A visit by top officials from Internal Affairs always created a stir at a district station, and preparations were akin to those made for a general inspecting his troops. A guard of honour was formed, with the administrative staff lined up according to rank on one side – from the DC, Assistant DC, district officers and accountant to cadet – followed by the District Assistants (formerly Messengers) in immaculate khaki uniforms. The extension and community development staff lined up on the opposite side, according to seniority. The Deputy Secretary, followed by the PC, then by the Senior CDOW, and finally by me, walked down the aisle, all the administrative staff standing stiffly to attention.

Suddenly Noel Hunt broke out of the procession with an excited grunt and headed for the vehicles and machinery that had been freshly cleaned and were parked in the immaculately swept yard. His entourage was required to follow him. He pulled a portable pressure gauge from his pocket and started measuring the tyre pressure of each vehicle, calling the maintenance man to heel, no doubt to give him hell if a tyre was found to be marginally under- or over-inflated.

I left the party at this stage – a breach of etiquette – muttering that I had to help Heather Collett, the DC's wife, with preparations for tea. Not that she needed my help. As on all such occasions, the wives of the junior officers helped the DC's wife to prepare the spread. I left because I found Hunt's demeanour too embarrassing. When he had had enough of distressing the station staff, tea for the VIPs and senior officers was



Deputy Secretary Noel Hunt



Installation of Chief Chikwizo, 4 July 1974

ready, boiling water being poured on the tea leaves with precision timing, a Messenger no doubt having been detailed to warn Mrs Collett of the party's imminent arrival at her home.

After tea we proceeded to Gondo Joyi kraal, where Chief Chikwizo was to be installed. Regrettably, I had to travel with Noel Hunt, at his insistence. He used our travelling time to regale me with his reminiscences about his engagement and successes in the slave trade in the Sudan before coming to Rhodesia. When his wife, Winsom, was expecting their first child, he told me, she insisted that they left, 'spoiling his fun'.

I did not believe a word he was saying, convinced that, once again, he only wanted to get a rise out of me with his obnoxious talk. Not wanting to give him that satisfaction, I kept my mouth shut. Then he started to denigrate the Shona chiefs, telling me that they were a bunch of senile alcoholics.

The Deputy Secretary installed the chief with due decorum and he related courteously, even warmly, to the people present. Not a hint of the detestable views he had expressed on the way.



Miss Wilson and I took the opportunity to meet with women who had attended some training courses. To the best of my knowledge, there were only three such women in the area,¹⁰ and only one women's club, affiliated to the Catholic Church, had existed a year before. I was treated to a surprise. Since they had returned from their training courses (two of them

¹⁰ Mrs T. Chikwizo (senior wife of the former acting chief): chiefs' wives courses, 1973 and 1974, one week, Domboshawa. Mrs P. Kamupita, FAWC courses, March and June 1974, one week each, Domboshawa and Chikondomo (Mtoko). Mrs M. Mbambe, Home Economics Course, 1974, four weeks, Domboshawa, and FAWC course, one week, Chikondomo.

run by me) earlier in the year, the three women, together with a local lady school teacher, had succeeded in forming four new women's clubs. This nucleus of clubs was now planning to participate in the agricultural show in the area this year – their first show!

Yet, generally speaking, this area was the most traditional one I had encountered in Mashonaland South. I saw many women and girls stamping grain with a wooden pole in a *duri*, a large 'mortar' carved from a tree trunk; elsewhere, grinding mills had been widely established. Quite a number of women did not wear a garment that covered their chest. The area was hot and dry, with baobab trees growing in profusion, an indicator of a hot, dry climate.



Women in Chief Chikwizo's area stamping maize in a *duri*

A few months after the chief's installation I was to sit with parents in this area, talking to them about the benefits of sending children to school. Many did not really see the point of doing so. In other areas, the nationalists could bank on the resentment of parents about the bottlenecks in the education system for their political education efforts.

What a contrast there was between Chikwizo and Chinamora TTL, where mothers were concerned about girls who had to leave school after Grade 7 and had already started establishing pre-schools!



Women Adviser Lucy Mukombiwa had informed me some months earlier that the committees running pre-schools in Chinamora TTL would appreciate a visit to the pre-schools currently operating. My brief was to assess the existing position and to advise on possible improvements. Thus, on 18 July, I visited Zimburu, Molife, Chogugudza, Nyakudya and Showgrounds pre-schools, accompanied by the Women Adviser, the chairwoman of the area pre-school committee, Mrs Mukweshu, and HED Mrs Matanhire.

All the pre-schools were housed in a classroom of the primary school with the same name. At each, about forty or fifty children were in the charge of one or two teenage girls, who occupied them by teaching them



Women Adviser Lucy Mukombiwa visiting pre-school teachers on her bicycle



A Chinamora pre-school before my course

traditional songs and games, English nursery rhymes and greetings. They taught them to read and write the alphabet and the numbers from 1 to 10. They used a blackboard and chalk provided by the school and scraps of paper and stubs of pencils that the children brought from home. There was no evidence of any toys or play equipment. At some schools, the children were given a high-protein drink in the middle of the morning.

The children were impressively well behaved, drilled in standing and moving in lines, standing to attention when called, and quiet in the classroom. As I entered, they all got up and greeted me with a ‘Good morning, Teacher’ in unison, followed by ‘How are you?’ This ritual was followed in every rural primary school I had ever visited. I acknowledged their greeting with ‘I am fine, and how are you?’ to which they answered in unison ‘We are fine, thank you,’ and then broke out in a giggle of delight, quickly suppressed.

At each venue the pre-school committee, comprised entirely of women, awaited me, eager to hear my comments. I asked them what had motivated them to start the pre-schools. The answer was the same at each one. Mothers wanted pre-schools because:

- Children who attend pre-school do better at school.
- We want to provide employment for some of the many girls who have left school.
- If a child attends pre-school, the mother is free to get on with her own work (knitting and crocheting, working in the fields or vegetable garden, selling tomatoes in town, etc.).

They were willing to meet the costs. Indeed, the mothers paid a modest school fee and some committees had engaged in fund-raising. A recent ‘beautiful baby’ show had raised \$35.50.

I was impressed with the dedication of the young girls, who did this work for a pittance, and were sometimes paid late or not at all. None had had more than the most rudimentary training – some had been allowed

to 'sit in' at a crèche (not a nursery school) in an urban township. Both the mothers and the girls in charge were crying out for guidance.

I congratulated all involved on a sterling effort, and promised to return with concrete suggestions for improvements at each school. (I hoped to return with experts for more than a day.) I promised a training course on the spot, though I had to tell them that the first course at Domboshawa would be available only in April of the coming year. At a later date, I collected data on each pre-school teacher and on the school she worked at in preparation for the course.

I mused on my way home how I could accommodate the 'building up' of rural pre-schools on a province-wide basis. I had been surprised when I first heard about the Chinamora pre-schools as women's community projects. In the meantime, I had learned that the desire to establish pre-schools was manifesting itself all over the province. There was a need to establish the concept of pre-school work and play rather than just keep children safe or teach them to read and write the alphabet and numbers. There was need to find or establish training facilities, to compile an inventory of minimum play equipment, to encourage (and train) parents to make it, to attend to hygiene, sanitation and health matters.

The women were voicing four crying needs:

- The provision of council awareness training – leading, perhaps, to helping them to lobby for changes to council warrants, for them to get the vote in local government affairs, and the right to be elected to councils.
- The establishment of adult literacy classes as community projects.
- The establishment of pre-schools which deserved this designation.
- The development of clubs for girl school-leavers with an exciting curriculum that would give them the knowledge they themselves desired (actually, they wanted to go further with their schooling) and leadership skills – or, alternatively, the better integration of young girls into the Young Farmers' Club movement.

I asked myself over and over again, How can I allocate my time more productively? Women's homecraft clubs and shows were all very well, but if only I had appropriate support at district level, or a professional assistant at province ... if only there was no war.



In the meantime I had to respond to other endeavours important to our target population. Look-and-learn visits were very popular among women. Eager to learn from others and to widen their horizons, rural women would collect funds, hire a bus and go on educational trips. They largely organized these trips themselves, sometimes with the help of the Women Adviser, and very occasionally I was marginally involved. The visit to Farirayi Kurima group was one such occasion.

Women Adviser Kurebwa from Gutu District had asked me if I could ask Women Adviser Shekede from Chiota TTL in Marandellas District if she would ask a women's farming group, about which they had heard, to host a group of about sixty women from Gutu TTL. I provided the link but did none of the organizing. I asked the Gutu group if I might accompany them as a learning experience for myself. They readily agreed. I met them at Salisbury South Sports Club (a club on the Beatrice Road, set up by commercial farmers) and boarded their hired bus, giving them directions.

We drove to Chibide in Chief Nenguwo's area, where we were met by Mrs Shekede. I smiled to myself when I saw her from a distance – she was wearing her quizzical look while she was watching out, but, as usual, she broke into her ready smile when she saw who we were. Farirayi Kurima (meaning 'Be happy through farming') was one of the many farming groups that had been formed in Chiota TTL over the previous two years. It had forty-five members, thirty-seven of whom were women; the organizing committee consisted entirely of women.

I was told that twenty-nine of the husbands of the women involved were absent in wage employment in town. Members of four adjacent kraals were involved in the project but not all the adult members participated.¹¹ The committee running the farming group was the same as that running the women's club, affiliated to the FAWC, which drew its membership largely from the same area. That committee, however, met on separate days for the two different purposes, separating business neatly. A Young Farmers' Club drew its membership from a somewhat wider area and its activities seemed to be well integrated with those of the adults.

The farming group responded to the agricultural extension programme carried out in the district and, apart from general cropping, directed its efforts to gum-tree and fruit-tree plantations, fowl raising, compost making for vegetable gardens, and the bulk buying of fertilizers and other chemicals.

Our visit had been very well organized by the farming committee and the Women Adviser. For each project they showed us, they had selected a

¹¹ They could have been said to have formed a 'development area', but they never used this term.

different speaker, who told us enthusiastically about what they had learned and how new ways of doing things – and hard work – had benefited their families. They also praised those husbands in town who sent back agricultural inputs, mentioning them by name (but not naming those who did not).

We were entertained with sadza, relish, a cool drink, and songs about good farming. In one of the thank-you speeches, a woman from Gutu said: 'We mothers are responsible for the fact that our children are growing up in poverty. It is us who are turning them into thieves. If we formed groups like this one, we could give them a better life and they would not go wrong.' Her words echoed the reasons for forming the Farirayi Kurima group given by one of its members.

Much processing of what had been learned happened on our journey back to town, and also much singing, which started demurely but got more and more ribald as evening began to fall. We parted happily at the Salisbury South Sports Club, where I had parked my car.

The following day, the Gutu group visited factories, which were popular destinations for look-and-learn visits. Mostly the women wanted to find out 'how our husbands spend their days in town'. I remember one group standing around a machine that counted and packed pills into little containers in the pharmaceutical firm CAPS. The machine-minder had to react quickly if the machine 'missed the bottle' and pills were spilling all over the conveyor belt or if the lid was not sealed properly. What fascinated the women even more than the fact that the pills were counted and packed by a machine was that the man's day was relentlessly controlled by the machine and its whims. They kept shaking their heads as they pondered this phenomenon long after we had moved on.



A visit to Soswe TTL, to which I invited Dorianne Graham-Jolly, proved not only very interesting but gave us the opportunity to enjoy our friendship and to 'talk shop' leisurely during the journey there and back. We celebrated this rare event with a picnic lunch under a shady tree. A bird party moved through to share in our joy.

The Nyahuye-wa-Soswe Council had set up a 'rural industry project', creating employment for girl school-leavers. They employed a skills trainer who taught them pattern-making and -cutting, how to sew school uniforms to a high standard, and the maintenance of sewing machines. All the schools run by the council required the children to wear uniforms designed and sewn at the project. When girls left to get married they carried with them

a useful skill with which they could augment family incomes. The girls were delighted to have visitors, and much fuss was made of us with singing and dancing.



I tried to keep visits to women's club shows (or to the women's club sections at agricultural shows) to a minimum, in an attempt to prioritize my work. However, I never attended just as a VIP. Much other work was done during these visits.

For example, at the Ngezi women's club district show,¹² on 6 September, the 'assistant judges issue' presented itself. Initially, judging the entries at women's club shows was done by the wives of DCs and junior administrative officers; head-office representatives of the national umbrella organizations also ventured out. Where there were commercial farms nearby, the DCs' wives often encouraged commercial farmers' wives to help – which happened frequently in Goromonzi District. In this district they also often contributed much food for the multitude of visitors. As women's clubs mushroomed, more area shows were organized and entries multiplied, so an acute shortage of judges developed. To remedy this, WGL organized excellent courses and trained so called 'assistant judges', drawn from club members with outstanding homecraft skills and from area trainers. The idea was that they should not judge in their 'home areas', but in shows in neighbouring districts.

The Ngezi district show committee had asked for judges and had been repeatedly advised that they should invite assistant judges from the neighbouring Mondoro TTL. They did not do so. They wanted me and head-office representatives from WGL and CWC. I wanted to get to the bottom of this problem, and I found out that assistant judges from Mondoro (Hartley) were not being invited to Ngezi (Gatooma) for three reasons:



Nyahuye-wa-Soswe rural industry project

¹² What was called a 'district' for the purpose of shows was sometimes simply a convenient group of 'areas', rather than an administrative district.

- They said that ‘all women from Mondoro and Ngezi are related to each other’ and are thus ‘open to corruption’.
- The Ngezi show committee felt that a district show should be judged by more important people than ‘assistant judges’.
- The show committee was reluctant to pay for transport expenses and to offer accommodation. ‘More important persons’, they said, never charged for transport and did not need accommodation.

We did not let them stew on that day. The new Women Adviser, Mrs Mapininga, appointed only in July, needed support. Mrs Chida (Women Adviser, Sanyati), Mrs Muzavazi (Women Adviser, Mount Darwin – on a field placement) and I did the judging. We made it clear, however, that we would never do it again. By the following year, the issue had been resolved, and ‘assistant judges’ were invited from a different Tribal Trust Land (i.e. not Mondoro) and their travelling expenses paid from show funds. The Women Adviser offered hospitality. As for the entries, they were of the highest standard – much more accomplished than any I had seen on any of the shows so far.



I attended Chinamora area show on 20 September. I was invited as a guest but was elevated to ‘principal judge’ as the farmer’s wife who had agreed to do this was prevented from coming by illness at the last minute. An ‘assistant judge’ trained by WGL and two Women Advisers, Rachel Chivanga from Seki TTL and Mrs Kanyowa from Bindura District (across the provincial boundary), judged most sections.

Attending this show was particularly useful for my work, as Chief Chinamora, next to whom I was placed during lunch, gave me three quarters of an hour of his undivided attention, imparting his views on all aspects of community development work with women in his area, which he was well aware of and fully supported.

While a variety of entertainment was offered to the crowd – children’s and adult choirs, displays of acrobatics by school children, and drumming – I had the opportunity to discuss various local issues with leaders and members of women’s clubs and with HEDs. I gathered that the role of HEDs was not well understood. Chief Chinamora invited me to give a speech before the prize-giving ceremony, so I used the opportunity not only to comment briefly on the show entries – I left the bulk of the comments to the ‘assistant judge’ to allow her to build up prestige – but to clarify the role of the HEDs and matters relating to their travelling

expenses, which the clubs would have to bear. Since representatives of the various Chinamora pre-school committees were also present, I announced the pre-school teachers' course planned for the first quarter of the coming year. This promise was greeted with much ululating, expressions of approval and delight.

Regrettably, from a time point of view, the chief invited me to present the prizes. But I still had time for discussions with Bertha Chibisa, Women Adviser in training for Mudzi District, currently on a field placement with Mrs Kanyowa, who had brought her on a field visit to the Chinamora show. I had feared that Mrs Chibisa, a widow, was a bit too shy for her role as Women Adviser.¹³ I was most pleased to see that she had gained in self-confidence. She later proved to be a most dedicated and courageous worker in the difficult circumstances that were to befall the people in her work area.



At the Mangwende women's club district show, the DC, his wife and wives of junior staff did the officiating. The show was most impressive, as it had been the previous year, for the sheer number of entries. The standard of articles was, however, unimpressive. This was perhaps not surprising, considering that most women were said to be women's club members. I can't remember whether the idea to base the membership of homecraft clubs on kraals (or groups of kraals) was the idea of the Chief or the DC or both. No doubt it was part of the organizing of neighbouring kraals into 'development areas', well advanced in Mangwende TTL. Many men saw it as an advantage that their wives did not venture out of their kraals to attend club meetings. In contrast, our Section saw it as a disadvantage that women did not venture further afield to meet women to whom they were not related through marriage, thus not widening their horizons.

Two 'assistant judges' and Women Advisers Norah Chitekwe (Mtoko) and Lydia Psuura (Mudzi) had been invited to assist with the judging, and they did this well. As I was not required for official tasks, I had time to discuss aspects of general work and, in particular, the psychological effects of the worsening security situation on the women they worked with, with Dinah Nyakabau (Uzumba and Maramba TTLs) and Jean Chirimuta (Mangwende TTL) – both from Mrewa District – and with their two colleagues from Mtoko and Mudzi. Adverse impacts were beginning to

¹³ It had been very difficult to find a woman with Standard 6 qualifications in the area in which she was to work. She had been trained as a Home Economics Demonstrator in my initial course in 1973.

be felt in Pfungwe/Uzumba/Maramba, though not yet, apparently, in Mangwende TTL.



To help prepare myself for what was still in the future, I paid my first visit to a Protected Village in Chiweshe TTL, where the PVs were fully established and Development Workers had been already posted. Viewing the village site together with Dorianne from a vantage point above the countless traditional huts, I realized that working in such huge villages would bring challenges that I had not met before. Even in peace time it would have done so. There being more money available than there would be in later programmes, the authorities had established a public-address system through which the entire village could be given a message or called to a meeting. Occasionally, music was poured out through it.

By mid-year it had become clear that I could not cope with my workload without putting in considerable overtime. For the most part, of course, my workload depended on myself. Apart from ‘assignments by the ministry’ – such as the training of Senator chiefs’ wives, or HEDs and other occasional projects – I decided on my work programme largely myself. Nobody forced me to respond to women’s calls or to put as much time into the support and supervision of field staff as I did. I could not help it. Nevertheless, in an attempt to rationalize the allocation of my



Chiweshe Protected Village

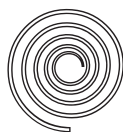
time, I started keeping time-and-motion records, starting in September. I kept these for a month at the time, at three-monthly intervals.

I gladly accepted an invitation to talk to chiefs and other male elders attending a provincial training course at Seke Chief's Hall. I brought Women Adviser Margaret Chitumba with me and let her handle the topic 'The changing role of rural women'. She acquitted herself splendidly, and brought humour to the theme by mimicking, for example, how some men raised their eyebrows when a woman 'who was even still young' spoke up at a public meeting while others conceded by murmuring approval because she had raised an important point. She herself was immensely proud to have been allowed to speak to such an important gathering on a topic so dear to her heart and remembers the event to this day. I then dealt with the role of Women Advisers and the work of our Section, laying stress on how the groups, courses and activities that the wives of progressive men got involved in benefited families and thus, ultimately, men.

I was often invited to give talks about the work of our Section to quite diverse audiences – the Rhodesian Association of University Women, the Business and Professional Women's Association, the Anglican Mothers' Union, a career symposium held at Girls' High School, Salisbury, and others. I always accepted if I possibly could because I felt it was important to let white women know of the endeavours of African rural women – especially as the war progressed.

Other invitations came from voluntary organizations involved in the development of rural areas and, increasingly, from DEVAG, the Department of Agricultural Development, at district or local level.

Despite the wake-up call of Chiweshe and Madziwa being moved into PVs, indicating that in time I would have to shift my focus towards 'sensitive areas', I was still doing much travelling in 'non-sensitive areas' – in fact, exclusively so in September. Of twenty working days, I spent twelve in the field, two at Domboshawa, and six in the office and at various meetings in town. Everything I was involved in needed preparation, reports, briefings and debriefings. Correspondence and – alas! – filing, needed attending to, as my files were never incorporated into the Ministry's registry system and I thus had no assistance from the registry clerk.



Periodically, I had in the past made efforts to learn Shona, the language of the majority of black Rhodesians. Most speakers of European languages who attempt to learn Shona as adults find it a most intricate language, its grammar complex. For example, there are twenty-one noun classes to contend with, each with its own prefix which has to accord with adjectives and verbs used in the same sentence. Shona is also a tonal language, and the placement of high and low tones can change the meaning of words otherwise spelled the same. And if you want to advance to what some call 'deep Shona', there are countless idioms and ideophones to learn.

I wanted to become fluent in the language of the people I worked with. In early March, I had asked Miss Wilson for permission to attend the Internal Affairs Shona course which was compulsory for its administrators. However, in May I was informed that there would not be a place for me on such a course in 1974, and probably for longer. I therefore applied for one month's leave during October and entered the newly instituted Intensive Shona Course designed by Professor George Fortune, Head of the Department of African Languages at the University of Rhodesia, and held at the beautiful Ranche House College in Salisbury.

My previous efforts allowed me to join the course at intermediate level. The college had just set up a language laboratory, the first in Rhodesia. I liked the drills in the language laboratory, the conversation sessions with a language informant. I enjoyed the company of fellow course participants and of those from other courses during lunchtime, but I struggled to learn the vocabulary. Mostly I was just too tired to concentrate late at night: I needed the energy remaining at the end of the day for my family. In addition, despite having taken leave, I worked in the office on Saturdays and prepared papers in the early hours of the morning.

I also had to interrupt the course to participate in the quarterly staff meeting of the Women's Section. This had been a stipulation for granting me the leave at this particular time. Nevertheless, the time I spent at the course gave me a welcome break and the chance to meet ordinary people interested in meaningful interaction and in the interchange of political views between the races.

I had attended conferences and talks at Ranche House before but this course gave me the opportunity to get to know the principal and his wife

Ranche House

Ranche House stands on the western side of the Harare kopje, and then had a commanding view of a large open space which was later to become Belvedere airport and thereafter Belvedere racecourse. Today, it overlooks the Museum of Human Sciences and Harare City Library across the trees flanking the busy Rotten Row thoroughfare.

It had had a long history and an impressive list of illustrious owners and occupants, the last of whom had been Sir Robert Tredgold, the former Chief Justice of Southern Rhodesia, and his wife. Sir Robert, a staunch opponent of racial discrimination, had resigned from the post he had held for ten years in protest against the Law and Order (Maintenance) Bill. He donated Ranche House for the purpose of setting up a multiracial adult-education college, which was established in 1961. In terms of existing legislation and land apportionment in the city it could not have been used for multiracial purposes. However, the relevant Act was amended, stipulating only that there could be no residential course of more than six months' duration. Ranche House was in time dubbed a 'Laboratory for Peace'.¹

¹ Rowland Fothergill, *Laboratory for Peace: The Story of Ken and Lilian Mew and of Ranche House College, Salisbury* (Bulawayo: Louis Bolze Publishing, 1984).

on a more personal level; I liked them both and respected them deeply. Lilian was the practical person and oversaw the finances, admission policy, accommodation, and other administrative aspects of running the college. She also interacted intensely with the students. Ken Mew was a flamboyant and much sought-after public speaker. He was a passionate and outspoken champion of social justice and remained so after independence, when ill-health forced him and Lilian to emigrate and live with their son overseas.

I had not become fluent in Shona by the end of the course but I could deliver a three- to five-minute speech when I started a meeting with rural women. After this spurt I needed a Women Adviser to interpret. As is usual with language learners, I understood far more than I could say. When my English was being interpreted, I never spoke in paragraphs, often not even in whole sentences but only in fractions of sentences. Thus I could immediately say, 'That's not what I said,' when necessary.

At the beginning, my interpreters would try to be helpful and, rather than interpreting verbatim, prematurely explain to my audience what they thought I was leading up to. This was most irritating because I usually envisioned a careful build-up to my punchline – to what I wanted to impress on my listeners or elicit from them. The Women Advisers learned to accommodate me. I seldom asked anyone else to interpret because others, not used to my ways, tried to be similarly 'helpful'.



Bob Woollacott took the opportunity presented by the re-demarcation of the Mashonaland provinces to revise and make more comprehensive the development policy formulated for the former Mashonaland South articulated by his predecessor, A.D.B.Yardley, and the former Provincial Agricultural Officer, P.A.Davies, which had concentrated on agricultural extension and co-operative societies.

He arranged a development conference at the Highlands Park Hotel for 12-14 November 1974 with all his provincial officers, DCs and senior agricultural officers in the districts. Each provincial officer presented a policy paper for the Development Section for which they were responsible. The seminar was a stimulating event and gave us the opportunity to get to know each other's work, mode of operation and personality better. In April 1975, after due discussion (including at DCs' conferences), our policy papers were bound together as *Ministry of Internal Affairs: Outline of Provincial Policy, Mashonaland East Province* and issued to all DCs and senior agricultural officers in the province.

I was asked to present a paper entitled 'Community Development with Special Reference to Women: Present Position and Outlook' before presenting a policy statement. My paper stressed, with plenty of evidence, that rural women, the Women Advisers and I were involved in all aspects of community development – not just with women's homecraft clubs. I hoped to shatter the myth that I was the provincial organizer of women's clubs and that the Women Advisers were the district organizers.

Women Adviser Rachel M'pakaviri, who started work in July 1974, had to wait for some months for her official introduction. Owing to work pressure, I had not even been able to visit her in the field. Instead she had had to travel to Salisbury and meet me in my office on a few Saturdays. A small woman, she had a very expressive face. Her brows furrowed deeply when she was thinking or worried, her small nose wrinkled when she burst into smiles. She appeared to be doing well, another self-starter.

In my office we discussed various issues, including that 'her' women complained that it was inconvenient for them to travel from Mondoro North to Mubaira township (in the centre of the TTL) for courses. Here was her opportunity to encourage a project – for these women's club members to seek suitable premises (an existing hall, for example) and to fit them out as a training centre for themselves. If necessary they would have to raise funds to add a kitchen.

We discussed the need for a Home Economics Demonstrator for the work area and the fact that the women's clubs in Chief Nyamweda's area

needed much help from her to boost their organizational capacity. Mrs M'pakaviri reported that thirty girls wanted to start a Young Farmers' Club and were referred to the district agricultural officer in charge of guiding YFCs. However, I advised, agricultural staff mainly trained club members in agricultural skills. It was the Women Adviser's responsibility to help girls' groups right at the beginning with organizational aspects such as the duties of office-bearers. In time, I suggested, she should also visit them to see what non-farming activities the girls would be interested in. I myself was always keen that they introduce public speaking and some fun activities into their clubs.

A women's project to establish their own training venue was indeed started in due course and came to a successful conclusion. The photograph below was taken on the day the women invited me to show me how much money they had collected for the project and to help them decide how they should proceed.

A field visit from me helped the process along. On 21 July, I took part in a meeting of women interested in the project, which lasted from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. All project meetings took some hours to allow everyone to have their say and so that decisions could be taken that everyone would adhere to. Permission had already been granted to them by Chief Chivero and his council to use the existing Mondoro North council hall also as a women's training centre. The meeting came to the following decisions:



The project in Mondoro North to make the council hall usable as a women's training centre.

Mrs T. Nyamweda, Vice-Chair of Nyamweda Women's Club Area Committee (left), and Mrs J. Mangwende, Chairwoman (right), count the money collected to buy kitchen equipment with me and Women Adviser Mrs Rachel M'pakaviri

- WA M'pakaviri and area committee representative to ask the council to repair the locks and give keys to the leader of the project group.
- PCDOW Chenaux-Repond to provide material for curtains from Vote S1 (Province) so that the hall can be used as a dormitory. The women to sew the curtains.
- WA M'pakaviri and area committee representative to ask the council to pay for and install curtain rails.
- Women's clubs in Mondoro North to collect money to buy the kitchen equipment listed by the area general meeting of women's club members. Contribution per club: \$2.10; 19 clubs ($19 \times \$2.10 = \39.90).
- PCDOW to augment the money on a dollar per dollar basis from Vote S1 (Province) when the contributions of all 19 clubs have been collected.
- WA and area committee representative to approach the Community Adviser and other resourceful persons for advice on building a kitchen for catering at courses and for cookery and baking lessons.
- The money collected so far to build the kitchen (\$45.70) was shown to Mrs Chenaux-Repond at the meeting. Chief Chivero has donated \$10 for the project; Chief Nyamweda is hoping to make a donation.
- WA M'pakaviri to approach the DC about financial assistance to the kitchen project from Vote S (District) for this community project (for example, window frames, roofing).

In my report to the District Commissioner I stated:

Community development has been at a virtual standstill in Mondoro North for a number of years. Recently the women's club movement has suffered a setback. This is the first project women are willing and eager to undertake and they have already collected money towards it. As we all know, it is vital for future motivation that the first project succeeds. Please direct the Community Adviser and Women Adviser to give it priority attention.

Other matters discussed at the meeting included literacy classes for adults, particularly women, and YFC clubs for school-leavers. I informed the meeting of the mechanics of setting up literacy classes with the help of ALOR and that sponsorship to finance the training of a literacy teacher and to guarantee her or his salary for two years had to be found. I informed the DC of the need the women had expressed and suggested that he recommend to the council that they undertake this sponsorship.

In respect of YFC clubs, I established that one girls' club (Gwinyai Club) had been formed, so far the only one in Mondoro North. I also established that the women present knew practically nothing about the YFC movement. They expressed the desire to learn about it. I brought this to the attention of the senior agricultural officer, Hartley (Mr R. Sheppard) and suggested that parents' meetings be called to be addressed on the objectives, structure and mode of operation of the YFC movement, possibly by Mr M Sifelani (Chairman of the YFC movement, Mashonaland) or alternatively by agricultural staff.

Up to now Wyn Wilson had usually officially introduced Women Advisers to their work areas. However, in this case it fell to me to introduce Mrs M'pakaviri to the people of Mondoro North. I chose to do this at a full council meeting on 21 November 1974. I had arranged beforehand that women leaders would attend the council meeting, as I wanted to prove to them that the public was allowed to attend such meetings as observers. With me present they would have the courage to enter men's territory.

My address followed the usual pattern: the role of Women Advisers, their training, what you can expect from them, praise for women who participate in community projects, and an appeal to chiefs, headmen, councillors and men in general to support women's projects and women's efforts to improve the lives of their families. I talked about the need for wells and Blair toilets. Chiefs Chivero and Nyamweda asked a great number of questions. It appeared that the chiefs believed that some women's clubs were favoured by the Women's Section at the expense of others, though there was disagreement as to which were supposed to be the favoured ones. There was talk about 'government clubs' and 'council clubs', though none could tell me how this misconception arose. Consternation was expressed when they were told that the Women Adviser is neither a skills trainer nor women's club organizer.

The men also branched out into their own argument as to whether or not women's clubs should be based on kraals and whether or not women should be forced to attend clubs. Mangwende TTL was the only one in the province where women's clubs were organized according to kraals or small groups of kraals. (This TTL was 'orderly' and regimented in other ways, too.) This meant that far more women participated in clubs but had, in my view, the distinct disadvantage that fewer women ventured out of their kraals. In most areas, one of the benefits of club membership was that women mixed with women from other areas and thereby became more outward-looking.

When I left the council meeting the women observers left as well

and I had the opportunity for further discussions with them and with others who had assembled in the meantime. I noted that they had a better understanding than the councillors did of the role of a Women Adviser and her relationship with the various national organizations to which individual clubs could affiliate and that this was the club's choice. However, there was a problem among them, too. Women from Chief Nyamweda's area had not attended Mrs M'pakaviri's official introduction. They had wanted a woman from their own area to be trained as a Women Adviser. It took Mrs M'pakaviri some time to be accepted by them.



Women Adviser Jane Mapininga, a slim, earnest and very conscientious woman, appointed on 1 July to Ngezi TTL, Gatooma District, had had her official introduction by Wyn Wilson. By the end of the year she reported on one of the first community projects that she had stimulated:

During my home visits at Chigubhu kraal one of the women complained about the scattering of faeces by her neighbours. I took the individual to see the kraal head, Mr Chigubhu. On hearing the complaint he promised to call for a meeting where I would be invited to talk about the dangers of such behaviour. He would also invite Nyere kraal head and his people.

I talked about the life history of the tapeworm. That it is man who is the primary host, who drops the eggs with his faeces which can be eaten by pigs or other animals like goats. The fertilized eggs hatch into six-hooked bladder worms which bore from the intestines and swim in the bloodstream and settle in some place in the secondary host. When we kill the animal and eat the bladder worm, the result will be a tapeworm within us. Apart from this there are many other diseases which are caused by such carelessness.

A few women stood up to agree with me but many men stood to disagree. However, one member stood up and asked what they should do to stop all this. I answered with a question: 'What do people in town do?' 'They use latrines,' nearly everybody answered. 'What's your problem then?' I asked.

So they agreed to work on individual family latrines. I promised to bring the Health Assistant to site the best places for their latrines. This he did and he pegged twelve. Four have been dug and are ready to be brick-lined from the bottom. Everybody has started some preparation.

As these are individual projects the cost will differ greatly, but it will be between \$10 and \$30. The Health Assistant will bring some cement from the Ministry of Health.



Friendly and reliable, Perpetua Muguto, appointed in July to cover Chikwakwa TTL in Goromonzi District, reported on a community project there at the end of the year:

As you know, since community development started, most schools are now under councils. Nyaguwi School has formed parents' committees. This idea for the project came from the school committee with the help of the School Manager.

There were not enough classes at the school, so the parents decided to build another classroom. The Community Adviser advised the parents' committee to find out the cost first so that they could work out how much the parents had to contribute and to ask how much the council would give. Parents who had children at Nyaguwi School have to contribute \$9.00. The council gave \$4.00 for each \$9.00 collected as a grant. Women and men helped with the work by moulding bricks.

The School Manager and the chief and myself encouraged them. The builder did a good job. The old buildings are not as good as the one built this year. The project is not yet finished. So far \$600.00 have been spent. The committee is still having problems of money from some parents because they have not paid the \$9.00. I hope by the end of the year they will be through.



On 1 December 1974, a second Women Adviser was appointed to Mudzi District – Mrs Bertha Chibisa, a former HED. There was consequently a reshuffling of work areas: Lydia Psuura was assigned to Ngarwe TTL, Chief Nyamukoho's area, and Bertha Chibisa to Mkota/Gorongwa and Chief Chikwizo's area.

Bertha Chibisa, a mother of six (five boys and a girl) was a slight woman of light complexion and with closely cropped hair. Her daughter described her in 2014 as 'strict with us children, a meticulous housekeeper, an excellent cook and brilliant at baking'. She had seemed to me a bit shy for a Women Adviser, but in her interaction with people she was humble

rather than shy. People trusted her and often came to her for advice on their problems, even before she became a Women Adviser. She proved to be a determined and hard worker.

I increasingly saw my role with field staff as supportive rather than supervisory and called the visits 'supportive/supervisory' in my reports. Women Advisers needed little supervision in respect of home visits, their approach to fieldwork and their daily input of work. They were totally devoted to the aims and methods of our Section. They needed regular in-service training to be able to respond appropriately to new needs expressed by women and to improve their written work, but mainly they needed support 'for problems they could not solve alone', help in establishing links with experts that could not be found locally, and, of course, moral support during the *chimurenga*.

I might add here that, in the light of the influx of donor agencies after independence, we could hardly ever provide monetary support ourselves or link women's groups to financial assistance from donors. While this certainly could have been genuinely helpful at times, we did not have to contend with, nor did we create, a dependency syndrome.

During 1974, I made a total of forty-six field visits, six of them lasting two days (a total of fifty-two days). With an average of twenty-two working days per month, this meant nearly two-and-a-half months in the field. My training commitments amounted to sixty-five training days during the year, thus almost three months – not counting any preparation or report writing. There were a total of eight courses. The Senator chiefs' wives' course (five days) involved the least preparation time but the most presence during the course.

Of the other seven courses I co-ordinated, the HEDs' initial course (twenty days) also involved relatively little preparation (apart from selection interviews and soliciting trainers) as the programme was standardized. The four HED refresher courses (five days each) involved a training-needs analysis, but thereafter the four courses followed a standardized programme based on that analysis, with the same trainers for each course. The two chiefs' wives courses also involved a training-needs analysis and then followed a standard programme for the two courses. While I was not present at every training session, or at the briefing and debriefing of trainers and trainees, the preparation of 'handouts' where I did the training myself also demanded time and attention.

Periodically I was invited to give a talk about the Section. During 1974 I gave such talks to thirty-four instructors of the ALOR functional literacy programme, to a Community Advisers' refresher course, to the Regional Authority Mashonaland South, to chiefs and headmen attending

two separate training courses, to the Gatooma Chapter of the Business and Professional Women's Organization, and to the Association of University Women in Salisbury.

Of special interest to me was a talk to a group on a Rotary 'Adventure in Citizenship' course at Domboshawa. The white youngsters taking part had had little opportunity to meet rural African women. I gave them an introductory talk on our Section's work and then, as I was running a chiefs' wives' course at the same time, I let them meet the participants. The youngsters explained to them what they were learning on their course and the wives of chiefs explained what they were learning – both groups through interpreters. A participant in the latter course even gave a brief talk on 'The Role of a Chief's Wife in the Community'. I received very positive feedback from both groups.

Miss Lamb, the Co-ordinator of the CWC, invited me to another 'problem-solving session' when she was running a refresher course for 'club helpers' (all voluntary workers), which included a number of nuns. I took Norah Chitekwe with me, who was at Domboshawa at the time. She was a good choice, as in her area clubs affiliated to the CWC and other organizations co-operated well. She handled criticisms of Women Advisers without ever being defensive. Some of the nuns stepped in, saying that friction between Women Advisers and CWC clubs were probably localized and could surely be solved there by discussion. I was glad to have the opportunity to fully explain the selection process for Women Advisers. Some club helpers had thought that application forms for the post were sent to the headquarters of women's organizations (which was never done) and that the CWC was being deliberately left out.



At the beginning of my work, rural women imagined that I would not eat their sadza and went to a great deal of trouble, sending someone to a distant store that sold bread, because 'Europeans eat sandwiches'. The bread sold was often stale, and I longed to join in their traditional meal of sadza and relish rather than having to eat the offering that they went to such trouble to provide. I was not very fond of bread anyway; I seemed to have a mild yeast allergy. Eventually, the women learned that I thoroughly enjoyed their traditional food.

I was always greeted with singing and dancing, and the women usually also sang a few traditional songs or hymns before the meeting closed. Often they adapted a traditional song to summarize what we had agreed on or to express appreciation for my coming, fitting new words to a well-

known tune. Invariably they accompanied me, singing and dancing, to the car to bid me farewell. Only later, during the war, did the singing and dancing become subdued, almost absent: the degree of exuberance could almost be taken as a measure of the level of distress.

I was often exhausted by the time I started my return journey but was almost always elated. Our meetings were usually successful in terms of problems solved, decisions reached, or conflicts laid to rest. But to my husband's chagrin I was also often very late getting home. Groups could not be hurried to reach consensus or to come to a decision. I also knew that time constraints would not allow me to return to the same group to wrap up any unfinished business. There was not always a hotel within convenient reach for me to stay in overnight.

Although I was often invited into rural homes (in areas of peace), I tended to decline the invitation, mainly because I was too tired. When I did stay, the people went to great lengths to entertain me with stories and singing. The children, too, were often asked to sing a song for me, which they usually did, even though it was scary for them. It was very touching to witness how the little ones were always applauded and praised, even if they sang off-key. I had always maintained that the only true racial difference was that most Africans could sing and that most of us Europeans couldn't. I learned that there was also a 'nurturing difference'. The rural children were encouraged to sing and dance and were rewarded with praise. I had been firmly discouraged at school, where you were allowed to sing only if you were 'choir material'.

When the entertainment was over, I was brought warm water in a basin or bucket to wash in, and I was shown to my hut or room; a teenage girl was always sent to spend the night with me 'so that I would not be lonely'. This was a very kind thought, of course, but after a day's travelling, hours of listening carefully to people and talking, I longed to be alone. Often I also needed to write down notes, lest I forget.

I liked to stay in DCs' 'rest camps'. Sometimes other visiting civil servants also stayed there while on a field trip, but more often than not I was the only guest. Food was not provided, but if one brought one's own, it was cooked by a (usually elderly) caretaker who also kept the premises immaculate. I remember Sanyati rest camp best – situated in Sanyati TTL on the banks of the river after which it was named – with its beautiful, shady indigenous trees and an emerald-green lawn stretching to its banks.



It was still 1974, and there was war. According to Rhodesian military and intelligence sources, the short-term military gains of the Protected Village programme were impressive. The guerrilla presence was much reduced, and the remainder could – in the view of even later military observers – have been defeated if the army had kept up the pressure.¹ However, international events were to influence events in Rhodesia profoundly.

In April 1974, the Portuguese army had revolted against the retention of colonial rule and toppled the Portuguese government, and military action against nationalist forces in Angola and Mozambique collapsed. Zambia's President, Kenneth Kaunda, was tired of the infighting of the Rhodesian nationalists in Lusaka. South Africa's Prime Minister, John Vorster, feared that a protracted war in Rhodesia would lead to a hard-core Marxist black government on South Africa's border. With Tanzania's President Julius Nyerere's input also, a ceasefire was forced on Rhodesia's two warring parties on 11 December. Ian Smith had to agree to the release of some prominent nationalist politicians. However, the ceasefire failed and, despite continued infighting in the nationalist movement during 1975, the civil war in Rhodesia intensified.

In the meantime conscription was extended, and men in the 35–50 age group were being called up, which included my husband, now aged 39. From now on I had to juggle my journeys so that I was always at home at night while Rolf was on call-up with the Police B (Field) Reserve.

Rolf spent Christmas on call-up at Humani Ranch in the Lowveld. Our younger girls had never been particularly perturbed about my frequent visits into the war areas. They had accompanied me on a few field visits to rural areas during times of peace and did not associate mum with war. On my part, to protect them, I told them little if anything of any danger I might have been in. However, war, danger and the possibility of injury or death was firmly associated in their minds with men on call-up. Thus, when Rolf was called up over Christmas they cried and cried. 'Poor Dad, he will have no Christmas. He might even be killed.'

¹ Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia, 1965–1980* (Marshalltown: Sygma/Collins, 1982), 29–30.

Rolf recounts two of his call-ups

In 1974 I received my call-up papers and was attested into the BSAP (British South African Police) as a 'B' (Field) Reservist. 'A' Reservists assisted the regular police in manning urban police stations and received some legal and other appropriate training for this; 'B' Reservists were employed in a defensive role, guarding commercial farms, railway lines, bridges and important stretches of the main road. They also carried out general patrols in the rural and peri-urban areas.

I cannot remember the exact sequence of my numerous call-ups during the next five years, each of which extended over a two-week period, but the first one took me to a railway-bridge crossing over the Sosonye river south of Rutenga, situated along the main road from Fort Victoria to Beitbridge on the border with South Africa. Rutenga consisted of a few stores, a couple of service stations, a few houses scattered about, most of them occupied by government employees, and an important railway marshalling yard as well as a BSAP station. The line to Maputo in Mozambique branches off from the main Beitbridge to Gwelo line here.

I had initially been kitted out with two sets of 'blues', a dark-blue uniform consisting of trousers and a combat jacket, two grey police shirts, a jersey, a hat, a couple of towels and a pair of black lace-up boots. A little later, a camouflage military-type uniform was added. I was also issued with an FN semi-automatic rifle in 7.62/.308 calibre, five magazines holding twenty rounds each, and chest webbing to carry four of these. This was the standard personal weapon issued to army personnel (also used in NATO countries). I deposited this rifle back in the Police Armoury at Morris Depot after each call-up.

Together with other freshly recruited reservists, I received some basic training at 'Hard Square', the main BSAP depot, was introduced to drill procedures, and fired a few shots at the depot's firing range and on a farm on the outskirts of town, where a 'bush run' assault course had been set up, simulating the real thing with pop-up targets and unexpected bangs going off every now and again. My previous shooting experience, stretching back over twenty years, stood me in good stead.

One cold winter morning, about thirty of us boarded a 'crocodile', a converted Nissan 5-ton flat-bed lorry with sloping sides of thin armour plating, intended to give some protection from land-mine blasts and small-arms fire. The armoured and enclosed driver's cab was separated from the main body of the vehicle. A long and very hard bench ran down the centre of the truck, on which we sat, back-to-back, facing small firing ports cut into the protective armour opposite each man. On later call-ups, a cushion was taken along as an essential item of equipment, and a balaclava to keep one's ears from freezing off!

The long, uncomfortable and uneventful 450 km journey from Salisbury to Rutenga was broken twice. First at Enkeldoorn, where we wolfed down an excellent full English breakfast prepared by lady volunteers, many of them farmers' wives and daughters, in the local forces canteen, and again at Fort Victoria, where cups of tea warmed us up a little. Another 150 km along the road leading to the South African border at Beitbridge brought us to Rutenga. Stiff and cold as we were, we were looking forward to reaching our final destination and to being able to use our legs again. From

Rutenga we were deployed in groups of ten or so to three railway bridges spanning rivers on the vital line to South Africa that had been constructed in great haste after UDI to augment the old lines through Botswana. The line from here to Mozambique was closed after FRELIMO took over.

The bridge across the Sosonye River, where we were stationed, was of steel girder construction, single track, and close to 100m long. Like so many rivers in the Lowveld, the Sosonye was shallow in the dry season, consisting of a series of permanent pools, and easily fordable on foot. The surrounding country was divided into huge cattle ranches of tens of thousands of hectares each and inhabited by a fair number of game, including kudu, giraffe and cheetah.

Our little camp, affectionately called 'the Fort', was situated at the southern end of the bridge, right next to the railway line. It boasted three small octagonal 'uniport' huts, consisting of galvanized-iron sheets bolted together. They were bunched close together. A sandbagged bunker with a railway-sleeper roof, topped with sandbags and containing the radio, was situated against one of the huts. The inside of the huts and the radio bunker (HQ!) were decorated with pictures of semi-nude ladies, obviously removed from old *Playboy* and similar magazines.

The walls of the huts became too hot to touch during the day, so we generally shunned them. The rest of the defensive works were a twenty-metre-wide area cleared of bush around the camp perimeter and some rolls of rusty barbed wire from which were suspended, at regular intervals, empty bully-beef tins, each containing a few pebbles. These were intended to give advance warning of uninvited guests during the hours of darkness. We slept on army-type camp stretchers, washed in the river, and answered the calls of nature in a long-drop loo half hidden behind some nearby bushes. Drinking water was supplied from a small tanker-trailer which was refilled at Rutenga every few days, when fresh food was also delivered.

Our main duty was to guard the railway bridge round the clock. It ended only twenty metres from the bunker. The bridge was guarded by one of the reservists, or sometimes two, in four-hour shifts, and the radio was manned as well. The camp commander had claimed it as his private domain. Only a few trains passed in any twenty-four-hour period. The early morning train always blew its whistle on approaching the bridge from the northern side and slowed down so that one of the railway crew could hand the guard the newspaper, followed sometimes by fresh vegetables or a parcel of goodies. So we had something to look forward to during our rather boring days.

We did sometimes carry out patrols along the railway line, which had been sabotaged a couple of times in the past, though little damage was caused. Sweeps through the surrounding savannah ranchland were more popular, at least with those of us who did not mind going for a walk in the bush. I always volunteered for these and carried my binoculars to enjoy some good bird-watching. During one of these patrols, when moving forward in extended line, I put up a caracal at close quarters from a dense patch of high grass. The caracal is a widely distributed but rarely seen predator and I had never seen one before, nor have I since. Years later, when I was on convoy duty along the same road, a cheetah ran flat-out along the shallow drain

parallel to our vehicle. We checked its speed at a little over 70kph for a couple of hundred yards until it dived at full speed under the five-stranded barbed-wire cattle fence and disappeared into the high bush grass. It gave me quite a thrill!

I often volunteered for night duty, as I enjoyed being alone on the bridge during the dark hours, listening to the night noises. I heard owls, plovers and nightjars regularly. One night I was startled by the noise of stones being rolled about in the riverbed far below the bridge, and when I shone my torch in the direction of the noise I was surprised to see three giraffe drinking from a pool, front legs splayed wide apart and long necks fully extended downwards. During another daytime watch, fourteen black storks arrived and stood or moved around in the pool – obviously a post-breeding assembly of these impressive birds who nest in winter on ledges of granite hills on mountains, widely spaced out.

The most exiting experience of this first call-up was rifle shots from the camp area. It was a dark night and I had just reached the far end of the bridge and thought at first that 'the Fort' was under attack. I carefully moved towards it. It turned out that the two reservists in the radio bunker had spotted a smallish (1.2 metres long) banded cobra on the floor. It was trying to hide between some sandbags but the men fired a couple of rounds each from their FN rifles in the very restricted space of the bunker, a very dangerous undertaking. The camp commander called them 'f***** idiots' afterwards. Luckily the only damage caused was a few punctured sandbags.

Like most police reservists at the time, we were a poorly trained and inexperienced lot of men. The 'townies' amongst us, who were in the majority, were more of a liability than an asset, as few of them had any bush experience. Some improved in time, others did not. One met all sorts of people, the shirkers and the whingers, the moaners and know-alls, but also reliable characters, including some veterans of World War II, whom one could depend upon no matter what. There were plenty of opportunities for striking up solid friendships.

I was on guard duty on the same bridge at a subsequent call-up and we were a bit better organized then. However, a group of determined and well-trained guerrillas could easily have overrun our little 'Fort' at night and blown up the bridge afterwards. Luckily most 'freedom fighters' were neither well trained nor well equipped in those days and were loathe to engage Rhodesian security forces, the kill-rate in fire-fights being about 1:10 on average. They preferred to lay Russian land-mines on dirt roads, which caused a number of civilian casualties, to indoctrinate and often brutalize the rural population, who, being caught between the two opposing forces, suffered terribly.

Small groups of guerrillas also mounted many attacks at night on many (white-owned) farms, using RPG rockets, machine guns and small arms. In most cases, these farms were occupied only by the farmer's wife and children (the farmer having been called up on active duty), and were guarded by a single police reservist. Very few of these attacks were pressed home, as the farmers' wives had learned to handle a rifle, a shotgun and an UZI sub-machine gun. Most farm homes had been surrounded by a 2.4metre-high diamond-mesh security fence (easy to cut for gaining access).

Strong security lights on high poles lit up the area at night and wire-mesh grenade screens had been fitted to the windows of the house. At dusk the gate was locked and no one was allowed in or out until first light. A special communications system called Agric-Alert was introduced, allowing people under attack to call for help from a reaction team on stand-by not too far away in most instances.

Guarding homesteads was called 'bright-lighting' and was much sought-after by the older reservists. Some of them struck up lasting friendships with the farmer and his family and tried to get posted to the same farm time and time again. One police reservist, a Frenchman, once beat off a guerrilla attack, aided by the farmer's wife, killing two of the attackers and wounding one. And a farmer returning home in the middle of the night tried to enter the house by squeezing through a small window and was shot dead by his wife who thought he was a guerrilla. Life must have been hell for most farmers and their families, especially for the womenfolk who hardly ever got a good night's sleep, slept with a firearm beside their bed, and had to run the farming operations during the day. The vast majority of the black farm labourers remained loyal to their employers. But the women are the unsung heroes of the war, without doubt. I never volunteered for 'bright-lighting'.

1974



A group of Home Economics Demonstrators receive certificates from Mrs Woollacott

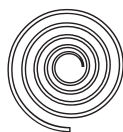


A 'women's project': Women have protected their families' drinking-water supply



1975





Early in 1975, the priority of my attention shifted to the so-called 'sensitive areas' in Mashonaland South: Mudzi, Mtoko and the northern part of Mrewa. They were adjacent to each other, situated north-east of Salisbury, towards the border with Mozambique. All three districts straddled the strategic Salisbury–Nyamapanda road, which led towards Tete in Mozambique and onwards to Malawi; they had been re-aligned and fully tarred in 1973. Roads leading off this main artery into the TTLs or on to farms were narrow gravel roads and some in the TTLs were merely tracks.

The former Mtoko District had recently been divided into Mudzi and Mtoko, the former lying along the border with Mozambique. All three districts comprised mainly TTLs, Mudzi exclusively so, while Mtoko and Mrewa also each incorporated an African Purchase Area and a relatively small commercial farming area, with exclusively white-owned farms. Consequently, the districts' populations were made up largely of African subsistence farming families, living under the immediate jurisdiction of their chiefs and headmen, with a much smaller number of African small-scale commercial farming families. The size of the European population in the TTLs and APAs was negligible and was made up of government administrative or extension personnel and a few missionaries and their families. The Mtoko and Mrewa centres had somewhat bigger European populations, but were largely of the same composition, plus some independent tradesmen. Even on white-owned commercial farms, the African population was predominant, owing to the relatively large labour forces employed.

The Women Advisers, Development Workers and I worked exclusively in the TTLs and APAs. The table on the next page gives an impression of the size of the sensitive areas and the populations we served. The census data available obviously appertain to a time before the war began.

Mudzi District was about half the size of the original Mtoko District and comprised Mkota and Ngarwe TTLs to the north and Mudzi and Chikwizo TTLs to the south of the main road. Though similar in size, Mudzi was more sparsely populated than Mtoko District. The area was low-lying, hot and dry, with baobab trees growing in abundance. A tsetse-fly-eradication campaign had been conducted probably two decades earlier and cattle were now allowed. The area had a high incidence of malaria. Its

Size of Mrewa, Mtoko and Mudzi districts and their populations – 1969 population census

District	Size (km ²)	TTLs and APAs	Total population in TTLs and APAs	
			African	Other
Mrewa	5,693	Pfungwe TTL	128,360	26
		Maramba TTL		
		Uzumba TTL		
		Chitowa APA		
		Mangwende TTL		
Mtoko	c. 4,158	Mtoko TTL	79,560	37
		Chimoyo TTL		
		Budjga APA		
Mudzi	c. 4,158	Mkota TTL	31,280	22
		Ngarwe TTL		
		Mudzi TTL		
		Chikwizo TTL		

TTL = Tribal Trust Land; APA = African Purchase Area (small-scale commercial farms with title deeds)

newly widened and tarred main road and the Nyamapanda border post were of importance mainly to motorists, cargo trucks and long-distance buses. During peacetime, the rural people had for decades moved freely between Rhodesia and Mozambique ‘through the bush’, and people from both sides had often inter-married. The authorities had never bothered about this free movement. They did so now, in the changed security situation.

The rural areas of Motko District encompassed Mtoko TTL, Chimoyo TTL and Budjga APA, and, in the south, the relatively small European commercial farming area of Hoyuyu, which produced both tobacco and mixed crops.¹ The Mtoko TTLs, with their countless granite *kopjes*, were very beautiful to the eye, but the kopjes and the often thick bush made them an ideal infiltration and staging area for the insurgents.

Mrewa District, also straddling the main Salisbury-Mrewa-Mtoko-Mudzi-Nyamapanda road, comprised Pfungwe, Maramba and Uzumba TTLs and Chitowa APA, to its north, and Mangwende TTL, largely to the south but straddling the main road. It also included a smallish European farming area to the south-east, bordering on Mangwende TTL.

¹ In the *Census of Population, 1969*, the population of Chimoyo TTL is incorporated into that of Mtoko TTL.

While I was still travelling in my own car, my access to the 'hinterland' was always via the district stations. Leaving Salisbury by road towards Mozambique one first reached Mrewa district station, a collection of old buildings situated 87km along the Salisbury-Nyamapanda road, a kilometre or so off the new tarred road, with massive, steep and almost bare granite 'balloon hills' as a backdrop. These can, indeed, be seen soon after rising into the air in a small aircraft from Mount Hampden airport when turning towards Mrewa.

Mtoko district station and village were situated 143km from Salisbury and 56km north-east of Mrewa. The village looked rather unplanned, was dusty and sprawling, and in 1969 housed sixty-seven Europeans, six Asians and five Coloureds; 1,110 Africans lived largely in the adjacent township. Apart from residential houses, 'Mtoko central' sported the small blue hotel where I often spent the night, a police station, the DC's office, a small hospital, a garage, some general-dealer stores, and an airfield nearby. Electricity was brought to the village only during the mid-1970s. As the war escalated, a Joint Operations Command (JOC) base was built at the airfield, home to a Fireforce unit with its Dakota transport planes and Alouette III helicopters. There was also a military hospital. Somewhat outside the village, at the foot of the Mutemwa granite 'balloon kopje' – a hill formed by a massive, bare granite outcrop, practically uncrevassed and rounded on the top – was the Mutemwa leprosy mission. Mtoko village was of strategic importance as the gateway to the north-east and north. It was a stopping point for heavy haulage vehicles travelling through Mozambique to Malawi and even further north, until the war put a temporary stop to transport activities.

Mudzi district station was still in the process of being built. During the first two years of my working there, the DC, Charles Collett, still worked from a residential house in Mtoko. (His ADC was Andy Parkinson, a very fluent Shona speaker.) Charles Collett oversaw the building of the new station, about 30km from Mtoko, with its modern and purpose-built facilities and a small training centre. However, it was not given to him to occupy the new station for long: he was transferred during mid-1976 and Malcolm Pratt moved in. As the war progressed, the new station also served as a refuelling point for the Rhodesian Air Force helicopters deployed in the area to support the ground forces.

Each district also had its mission stations, the main ones being Dendera in Mudzi, Nyadiri in Mtoko, and St Paul's and All Souls in Mrewa District.



ZANLA had established bases in Mozambique and Zambia, and major infiltration routes led from the Mozambique border through Mudzi and on into Mtoko and Mrewa districts. The border areas with Mozambique and Zambia were divided into infiltration segments. This particular corridor was known as the Takawira Sector. The northern part of Mrewa District was partly infiltrated through the Chaminuka Sector, further north. By early 1975, the three districts had been heavily infiltrated by ZANLA. In response some PVs had been established in Mrewa's northern part.

The white population in the three districts increased considerably as the Ministry of Internal Affairs assumed a paramilitary role and as military and air force personnel moved to the air force base at Mtoko.² I never fully understood how all the military and paramilitary units that were added successively to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (which had become known as Intaf for short) fitted together with the administration. We officers of the Women's Section were never officially briefed. Members of most units were conscripted and so were on 'call-up' for various lengths of time, with 'rest and recuperation' periods at home in-between, and moved into and out of the district.

There were young national servicemen serving in the ministry instead of in the army, air force or police. There were the territorial echelons with their rank structure of Vedettes, comprised of older men on call-up, most of whom were employees or employers in civil life. The echelons also incorporated young men who had completed the initial phase of their national service and were now on call-up. Some members of the territorial echelons were current or former staff of Internal Affairs. For example, I learned much later that Vedette Dave Rockingham-Gill, whom I met in Mudzi, had joined the ministry as a Cadet and worked in it for a few years before he resigned to travel through Europe for some years. When he returned to Rhodesia, he was conscripted to serve his call-ups within Internal Affairs.

Initially, all these additional Intaf personnel were dressed in khaki uniforms with a red beret, though I also often saw young Intaf national servicemen in khaki shorts and sleeves, without berets. Later some units were issued with camouflage dress, or they wore camouflage when on an offensive operation. Then even the administration went into khaki uniform, some even into camouflage (though some DCs and administrative officers refused wear uniforms) and khaki-uniformed Vedettes were assigned to

² 'The operational areas were served by a network of Forward Airfields (FAFs), which ranged from large facilities like those at Grand Reef (Umtali) and Wankie to airstrips attached to JOCs like that at Mtoko. A FAF was any airfield out of which aircraft operated in support of security forces' operations...'. Paul L. Moorcraft and Peter McLaughlin, *Chimurenga! The War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980* (Marshalltown: Sygma/Collins, 1982), 55.

administrative duties when DCs' offices became short-staffed. All were armed. It was all very confusing.

In September 1975, a new military unit, the Guard Force, was created in terms of the Defence Act. Its purpose was to take over from Internal Affairs the guarding of Protected Villages, thereby allowing the ministry to focus on its core function – district administration. They were a motley collection of individuals, in my view, drawn apparently from all corners of the world.

Administration Reinforcement Units (ARUs) were also established in each province. Their role was to conduct offensive operations into areas where the insurgents had gained control and to bring them back under government control. They were composed largely of staff members of Internal Affairs (district and senior district officers, and, the majority, District Security Assistants) and underwent rigorous counter-insurgency training. Since they were always in combat dress, I thought they were army.



Wyn Wilson had instructed me to discuss the stationing of Development Workers with DCs Mudzi (Charles Collett) and Mtoko (John Saunders), and ADC Mrewa (Charles Nicolle). At first they had some reservations, mostly because the young women were 'unattached'. On 13 January 1975, I reported truthfully as follows:

Results of my discussions with DCs:

Two Development Workers wanted in each district.

Mudzi: to be stationed in the new (and so far only) Makaha PV. However, the situation is not clear at present. If it is not possible to use them in the PV, to station them at the Keep at Msau (Mkota) and work in resettlement area. (Msau is in Women Adviser Psuura's work area, but she is not able to cover this part at present.)

Mtoko: to be stationed in the Keep in Charewa North (Mrs Gurupira's area). Mtoko's need is not as great as Mudzi's, as there is at present no PV in the district.

Mrewa: to be stationed at Nyakasoro PV. However, the population of the village is very small, c.200 adults. [It was to grow later.] Thus the DWs would have to work outside. No Women Adviser in the area. It is intended that Nyakasoro inhabitants be allowed to go home when the situation allows.

Fears: Both DCs and ADC think that problems are likely to arise out of DWs getting involved with males in the Keep.

DC Mtoko says he refuses to get involved in looking after their morals.

Wyn Wilson was very peeved by reservations expressed by the DCs and apparently thought I had influenced them; despite all her sterling qualities, she was easily miffed when she felt crossed. She sent me a confidential letter (which was placed on my personal file), with a copy to the Provincial Commissioner, that stated:

From what you say there is little point in putting any Development Workers in Mudzi, Mtoko or Mrewa. From the start you personally have been against these workers and this is reflected in the opinions stated from District Commissioners. I regret that I have not had the opportunity to discuss with the District Commissioners. Having had the experience of selecting, training and supervising these workers, I would have been in a better position to explain the policy.

Bob Woollacott replied to her in person:

Your decision is to be regretted and I do not accept that Mrs Chenaux-Repond has 'personally been against these workers'. She had my full support in submitting her report and what has been said reflects the views of our people on the ground. There seems to be no point in pretending that DCs do not have certain reservations, but they are perfectly willing to give the idea a try.

I would be grateful if you would reconsider your decision, please.



On 10 January 1975, I made my first visit to an established PV in Mashonaland East – Nyakasoro in Pfungwe TTL in the northern part of Mrewa. I still travelled in my own car, along the narrow, winding dirt road about 70km towards the Mazoe river and the border with Rushinga District. This road was later frequently mined. I was accompanied on this journey by Women Adviser Jean Chirimuta from Mangwende TTL as Dinah Nyakabau was not available.

When we arrived we found most of the women inhabitants of the village assembled at the nearby Nyakasoro dam, watching the fishing nets being hauled in. Fishing was organized and controlled by Internal Affairs, netted fish being sold cheaply to the population. An ideally relaxed situation thus existed for holding an impromptu meeting. However, the atmosphere was distinctly different from that at any meeting I had held with women in other districts, or even in Mrewa District, before the war.

I sensed a general feeling of mistrust, even some hostility, towards me, this white apparition from Salisbury.

I cannot remember the details today, but it appears that moving Chief Chitsungo and some of his people to a PV had been a punitive measure after they had been found to have harboured insurgents. Their previous homes and food stores or crops were probably burned, which would explain why they were given rations to settle in. The women referred to themselves as *banditi* (prisoners) throughout the meeting. They expressed a very negative attitude towards fertility trenches.³ It was clear that they thought that they were being made to dig these as punishment. They complained that their rations were inadequate and said that they could not be expected to work while hungry.

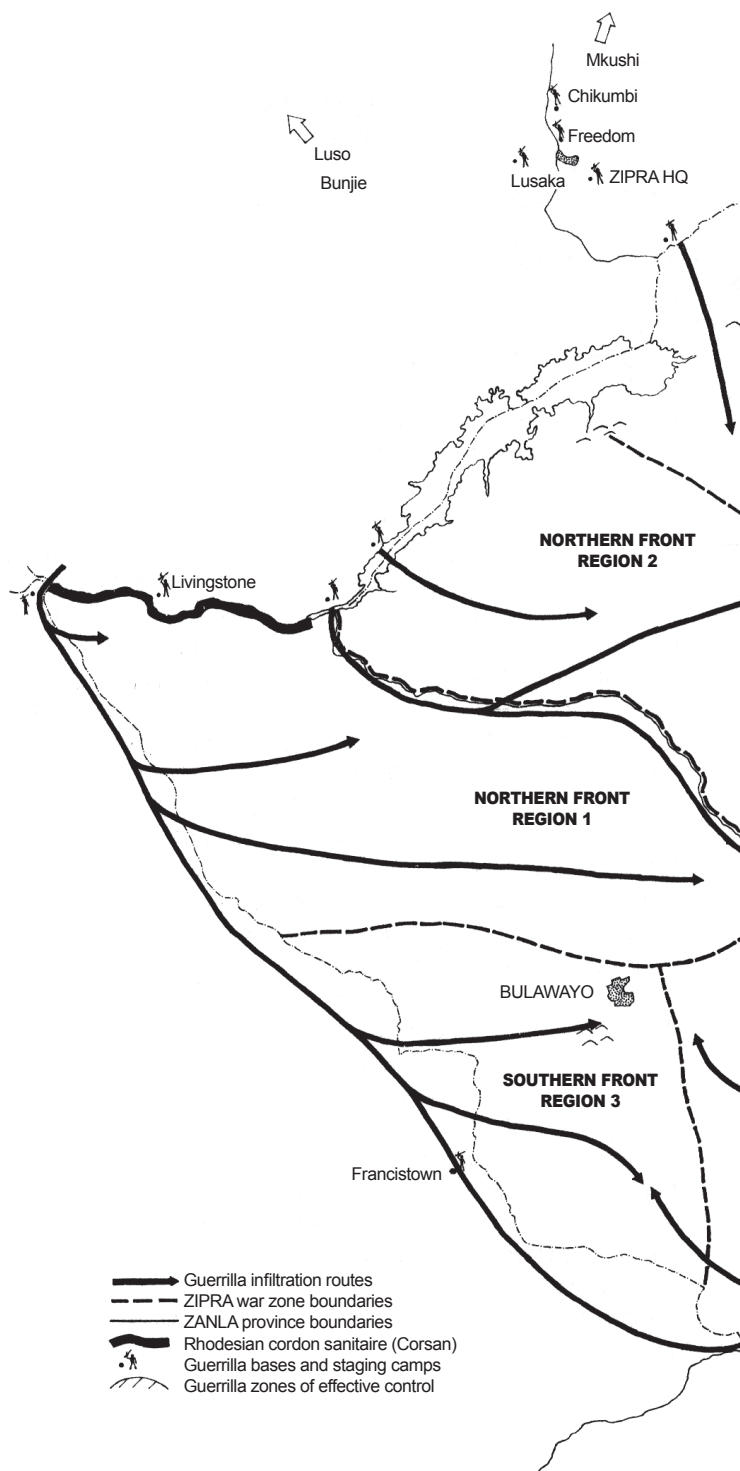
I listened for some time to the discontent the women expressed about the 'agricultural programme imposed on them', asking questions to elicit information, as I was not familiar with the programme, nor why it should have been 'imposed'. Throughout I encouraged the women to raise the aspects that they were unhappy about with the area's agricultural officer, Mr Rapson. After about two hours of listening to grievances, it transpired that Mr Rapson had actually visited the village the day before and had proposed a new approach. Now the women themselves volunteered that they would be satisfied if the new approach was implemented. I realized that they had simply raised these issues with me – at length – to find out what kind of a person I was.

I was to be submitted to similar 'tests' often from now on in the operational areas: people raised all sorts of red herrings to engage me in discussion to enable them to find out if they could trust me. Usually they accepted me and learned to trust me in due course, but often their preliminary investigations took hours.

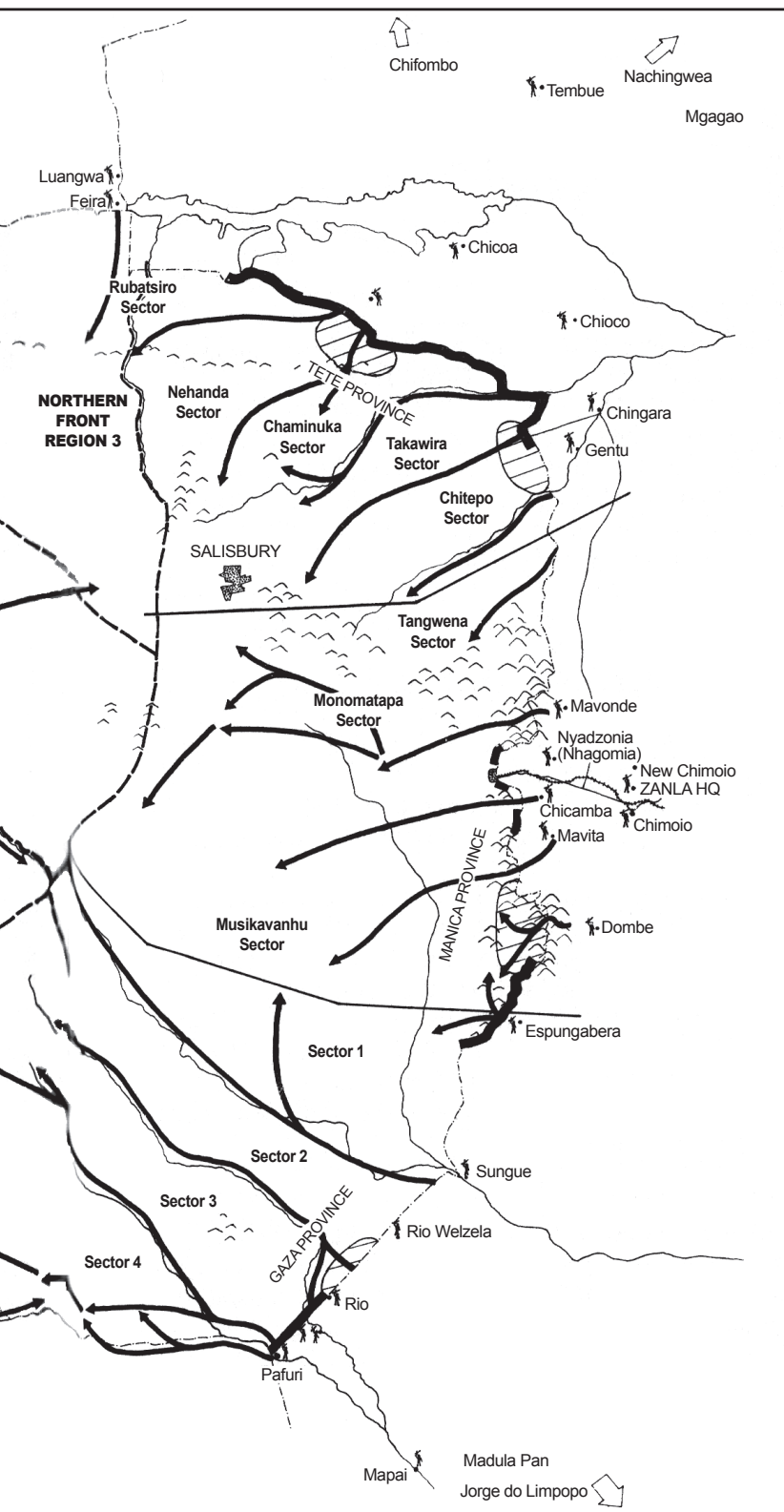
I gained the impression that the women looked upon their stay in Nyakasoro PV as temporary, as a punitive measure, and as a totally wasted period of their lives. I suggested that they imagine themselves at a later time in their lives, looking back at their situation 'behind the wire', as they put it. Would they then say: 'We did not want to be there, we never liked it there and we wasted that part of our lives'? Or would they say: 'We did not plan to be there but we used the time to good advantage'.

³ Fertility trenches were introduced by DEVAG all over the country as a means of boosting vegetable production. A fertility trench is really an inverted compost heap. You dig a trench the width of a normal vegetable bed and one metre deep. You then put in vegetable matter (even dry grass if there is not much else), top it with manure, if you have it, alternating layers of vegetable matter with layers of soil. In Zimbabwe it is best dug in the rainy season, so that the vegetable matter can break down quickly. The soil is thus enriched, gets a better structure and will retain moisture better during the dry season. Earthworms move in, enriching the soil further.

Guerrilla infiltration routes



Sketch from
Paul L. Moorcraft and
Peter McLaughlin,
*Chimurenga! The War
in Rhodesia, 1965-1980*
(Marshalltown: Sygma/
Collins, 1982), 74-75.
Reproduced with permission.



We learned things and started to do things as a result of which our lives have become richer and we became better (more progressive) persons’?

I asked them to think of their children, who were sitting among us. When they were grown up and looking back on their childhood, would they say: ‘We lived for a time in a Keep. Our mothers did not like it there and so they wasted their lives and ours’? Or would they say: ‘Our mothers made the best they could of the situation they found themselves in; they learned new things; they started things from which we benefited and which gave us a better chance in life than we would otherwise have had’?

There was no immediate response, but I could see that at least some of the mothers were mulling this over. We discussed the possibility of forming a women’s club in the village and Mrs Chirimuta gave a short talk on the benefits of clubs to mothers and their families. During the ensuing discussion, the atmosphere and leadership of the meeting began to shift and a young woman emerged as the spokesperson for a more positive approach to their situation.

Nyakasoro

Nyakasoro had at once been a DC’s outstation. By now it had become a protected Internal Affairs base. In addition, both the police and the army stationed personnel there from time to time. There were several brick buildings there that had been built years before, some of which, including the main residential house, were used by security forces who travelled through. The camp lay almost adjacent to a dam, well stocked with bream. It had an airstrip nearby and a helicopter pad inside the fence.

I spent many a night there, though the shower – an ‘add-on’ to the main house – was certainly not equipped with women in mind. The top part of its door had at one stage sported a milky window pane to let the light in; this had long been broken and was never replaced. So, with all-male company abounding, I had to hang a cloth over the opening. The Development Workers lived in a pretty thatched cottage.

It was at Nyakasoro that I learned to drink beer. I had always disliked its taste, could not understand how anyone could wish to drink it. It had been an exceedingly hot day and I had been out in the village all day. I was now sitting in what functioned as a common room, writing up notes on my lap. The kitchen door was open. I heard troopie after troopie come in, open the fridge and be told, ‘No, you can’t have it!’, grumble and move on.

In the evening, as they all sat together, trying to have such sundowners as there were, I found out that there was only one beer in the fridge and that whoever was in charge of supplies had decreed that it was to be reserved for me. How could I possibly say that I did not like it? I started drinking it from the bottle, holding my breath – there were no such luxuries as glasses in the camp – and to my utter surprise I loved it! I thanked them all profusely for having kept this treat for me and I have liked beer ever since!

By this stage I noticed a restlessness among the women and suggested that they return home to cook the midday meal. Mrs Chirimuta accompanied them while I joined the administrative and agricultural staff, who had arrived in the meantime. (We had no lunch.) The Women Adviser met the headman in the village and put to him the suggestion to form a women's club. His reaction was positive, but he also expressed complaints about the agricultural programme.

When I joined the women again, after their meal, they offered to show me the fertility trenches they so resented. They pointed out the very stony ground in which they were expected to dig. As we sat around the trenches they raised more problems: Their houses were infested with bed bugs (*tsikidzi*) and the roofs leaked. After listening for a while to their complaints, I asked them how they proposed to solve these problems. I had spotted the ADC, Charles Nicolle, nearby, so I also asked whether they would like me to bring these problems to his attention while they found some solutions themselves. They asked me to do so and I did.

As I returned to the group, the emerging new discussion leader pointed out that some families had had *tsikidzi* before they came to Nyakasoro, but now, with families living so close together, all the huts had become infested. She suggested that it was perhaps not all the government's fault and that there were things they could all do themselves to rid themselves of this plague.

The offshoot of my first visit was this: The women would smear the inside of their walls with mud and the floors with cow-dung to minimize the breeding places for bugs. The administration (the ADC had assured me of their co-operation) would arrange for the fumigation of the houses. As far as the leaking roofs were concerned, since the inhabitants of Nyakasoro had not thatched their houses properly when grass was available, they had to bear the consequences and ensure that they thatched them properly in the next dry season when a new crop of grass would be ready. In the meantime the agricultural officer would try to arrange for some second-hand fertilizer and cement bags to be brought to the village to patch the roofs. Getting rid of the bed-bugs became the women's first community project. Some goodwill had been established.

I concluded that leadership potential for the formation of a women's club was available, but that at the beginning considerable assistance was needed, particularly to foster motivation and organizing ability. Skills training was definitely also needed, as there seemed to be no area trainer or HED in the village. I did not tell the women this, but I decided to make sure that our Section made a donation of wool and fabric as soon as they had done their part in the bug-eradication project. This would

provide recognition (the first project is always a 'big' project for those undertaking it) and would ensure that a club programme could get under way. For future reference, I kept in mind that during our discussion some women had pointed out that most of them were illiterate and that they would like to learn to read and write.

By April we were able to station the first two Development Workers at Nyakasoro (Eugenia Machiridza and Grace Nhumba) and eventually even a literacy teacher (Prisca Dumba). Of that more later.



Course bookings at Domboshawa had to be made six months in advance. For February and March I had booked accommodation for two courses for women in Chief Mkota's and Chief Chikwizo's areas in Mudzi District, whose people had been resettled from the border areas as early as July 1974. Few of the women of these parts had ever had the chance to attend any course: there were few women's clubs and practically no voluntary workers in the area. Representatives of women's club umbrella organizations had never reached here and would certainly not travel to 'war areas' now.

Believing strongly in the value of fertility trenches to boost vegetable production and thus forestall malnutrition, I wanted women to see them in areas where there was peace, where people had adopted them voluntarily, and where vegetables were growing successfully on account of the compost that both provided nourishment and helped to retain moisture. Above all, I wanted time with them to establish relationships and trust. The population would soon be moved into the PVs. There was no time to lose.

Since both the Women Advisers (Mrs Psuura and Mrs Chibisa) were new in the field, and since I did not know these remote areas, I decided that I must do the recruiting myself. I discussed my proposal with DC Collett. He suggested that women living in the vicinity of Msau, Kondo and Chikwizo Keeps (currently under construction) should attend the courses. Furthermore, he invited me to accompany him on one of his visits to the area to familiarize myself with conditions. Travelling with him, I would be protected.

I drove to Mtoko towards nightfall on 6 January – after a full day of preparing course material for the forthcoming Women Advisers' refresher course, including a pre- and post-test on local government – and spent the night at the Mtoko Hotel, where all rooms faced the sea. In the morning, I accompanied Charles Collett and his staff on their tour of duty in the border area and to the sites where Keeps were being established. We

travelled in mine-protected vehicles and with armed escorts. I was glad to have this opportunity while travelling along to discuss the prevailing security situation, the support my field staff needed, and what we hoped to achieve when we could eventually place Development Workers in some CVs and PVs. Charles Collett had always given my work maximum support and was keen to have as many Development Workers as possible stationed in the district.

On 16 January I again drove to Mtoko during the late afternoon – after making further preparations for the Women Advisers’ refresher course, buying the material for their uniforms in the morning, and attending a funeral in the afternoon – to arrive again at nightfall. There was only one other diner. The bar had no attraction for me and I was glad to have an early night. Mrs Psuura and Mrs Chibisa met me at the district office at 8.00 a.m. the next day.

We travelled again in the DC’s convoy. He had called two meetings – in a sensitive area, this practically amounted to an order to attend. Charles Collett dropped us at Msau, proceeded on other business, later collected us from Msau, dropped us at Kondo, collected us from there again and brought us back to Mtoko. He often went out of his way to support our work and we truly appreciated this.

At Msau we found that approximately 250 women and teenage girls, and about the same number of babies and toddlers, had assembled in the vicinity of the Keep, already under construction. Armed guards were discreetly stationed in the surrounding bush. The waiting women, as always, were seated on the ground, on their *zambias*, their backs straight and their legs stretched out at right angles.⁴ While I usually sat among them at meetings, in order to be seen and heard by so many I had to stand – and shout! I introduced myself with details of my role and examples of the work I was doing with women elsewhere. I introduced the Women Advisers, their role, their training, and when and for what areas they had been appointed. I explained what women could expect to learn at the courses offered and what kind of woman was eligible for attending. Lastly I described the Domboshawa Training Centre, its *raison d’être*, and the type accommodation and kind of food that participants could expect.

At this point I interrupted the proceedings for Women Adviser Mrs Psuura and myself to call upon Chief Mkota, whose kraal was near the Keep, in order to notify him of our proposal. Of course, this could not be done in a hurry; some protocol is involved in such a visit. The chief,

⁴ A *zambia* is a piece of colourful cloth wound around one’s dress to protect it from being soiled. At meetings it is spread on the ground to serve as a ‘mat’. It is also known as *chitenge*.

in due course, indicated his approval and said that he would encourage women to attend the course. 'You must not think', he said, 'that my people do not want to learn. We have up to now been neglected.' Rapport and trust between us was facilitated by the fact that the chief remembered me as having spoken at the presentation of certificates to graduating literacy students at Nyamaruka in July 1974.

Women Adviser Chibisa remained with the women to find out what training courses anyone might have previously attended. She learned that there was one women's club in the area; four women present stated that they were members of this club, three said that they knew Mrs Chitekwe,⁵ and one said she had seen me at the same ceremony in Nyamaruka where the chief had seen me. At times it could be a distinct advantage to be practically the only white fish among a shoal of black fish; it made one very visible. Among the 250 women and teenage girls, Mrs Chibisa found none who had ever attended a training course.

I re-joined the assembly and informed them about the chief's approval of the course. I offered seventeen places for the course starting on 23 February and made the following arrangements: Chief Mkota's messenger would advise the Keep on 31 January of the number of women accepting. The correct number of travel warrants would be issued to them via the Keep.⁶ Both Women Advisers would meet the course participants in Mtoko on 22 February and travel with them to Domboshawa.

We now proceeded to Kondo. We had been scheduled to arrive there at 14.00 hours but arrived an hour later and found 468 women present – a count had been taken by the guards. The gathering was in a noticeably unreceptive mood. Many of the women had arrived in the morning and had come without refreshments. It was an exceedingly hot day. They were sitting in a massed circle, surrounded by armed guards. Regrettably I was not quick enough to ask the DC to withdraw them and he had already left.

We went through the same introductions and explanations that we had given at Msau. Throughout our meeting I distinctly felt that the women considered themselves to be there under duress. Many eyes glazed over. On the other hand, the women did not have the courage to disperse. Rapport was almost impossible to establish. No response was forthcoming to my attempt to elicit background information. Nevertheless I felt that a few women (four to be precise) would probably like to come to the course. Eventually one old woman got up and told us that women in the

⁵ Women Adviser Chitekwe had occasionally visited the area before the vast Mtoko District had been divided into Mudzi and Mtoko districts.

⁶ There were always some semi-military Internal Affairs personnel present when a Keep was under construction.

area were not prepared to come to any course, or to hear about women's clubs, as long as their children were not attending school. Since I could not establish from the meeting just why the school had been closed, I left the Women Advisers in charge and went to the Keep to get information.

At the Keep I was told that the school had been opened a year ago with one classroom and one Grade 1 class. The community had not built a second classroom for the intake of a further Grade 1 class by the beginning of the following school year. When the security situation flared up, many parents had sent their children elsewhere and the teacher left. As a result the school had not been re-opened at the beginning of the second term.

I returned to advise the women to discuss the problem of their children's schooling with the tribal leaders who, in turn, should discuss the community's suggestions with the DC. I offered ten places to women of the Kondo area on the course starting on 23 February. Mrs Psuura arranged a follow-up visit to them. Fortunately, the DSA in charge accepted that I, as the DC's representative, had the authority to dissolve the gathering, and the women dispersed, leaving the Women Advisers and me to watch the construction exercise and await the return of the DC's convoy.



Owing to unforeseen circumstances, neither of the Women Advisers could accompany me on my third visit to 'resettlement areas' (on 31 January), where a PV was under construction. However, the DC made Senior Community Adviser Fani Mango available and the latter actually drove me there. He said he did not need a guard, which was fine with me. Being alone, we had very interesting and frank discussions. He certainly knew his people and told me much about what they were thinking and their attitude towards the insurgents, information I would otherwise not easily have come by.

We also talked, of course, about development issues and personal matters. I gave him the story of my life and he gave me his. Fani Mango had grown up in this remote area, had initially trained as an Agricultural Demonstrator and had returned to his home area full of missionary zeal. With the scientific farming methods he had learned, he would make his people prosperous! However, 'the prophet was not honoured in his own country'. His elders would not listen to this young upstart. After all, they had done it their way for generations. His parents pointed out that they had sent him to school on the proceeds of their 'old-fashioned' farming methods (although an uncle working in town had helped). Mr Mango

volunteered that as a young man he had sometimes literally cried himself to sleep, feeling utterly rejected and a failure.

Then David Ford, nicknamed Jongwe (cockerel) because he got up so early, had arrived in the district as Agricultural Officer. Dave Ford was an unusual man. A fluent Shona speaker, he was in no hurry to teach anybody anything. He made it his first task to get to know the district, the people, and their reasons for doing things the way they did. In respect of soil erosion, he discovered that people had three beliefs: 'every drop of rain contains a grain of sand', 'rocks grow out of the soil', and 'if God created the world in six days – as you white people tell us – he can also re-create it again in due course'. Thus, they argued, there was no need for newfangled, and labour-intensive, conservation measures.

Mtoko District had been declared an ecological disaster area in 1965. Soil erosion was rampant. One day Dave was assessing the erosion damage of the Madzonga vlei (wetland), in Chief Mtoko's area, halfway between Suswe and Mtoko. The former wetland had completely dried out. Mulling over the work that would have to be undertaken to restore it, he got talking to a very old man who was lingering at the vlei's edge. He asked him to describe what the area had looked like in his youth. The old man recounted that there was standing water in parts of the vlei throughout the year, teeming with fish. He described the reed beds from which the men had harvested reeds to make into sleeping mats (*bonde/maponde*). Dave asked him: 'If I promise to help your people to restore the vlei to the state it was in during your youth, will they work with me?' The two men made a pact. 'If you can bring back the fish and the birds, we will listen to you about new ways of farming,' the old man said.

Dave also had other conservation concerns. Some people had told him that they did not want to dig contour ridges in their lands to keep the soil from being washed away 'because the ancestral spirits cannot walk across them'. They may have genuinely believed that, but he was also aware that digging and maintaining a contour was hard work, which some were eager to avoid.

Dave asked for an audience with Chief Charewa, an ancient woman, who lived in virtual seclusion and was in charge of all spiritual matters of the Nehoreka house of the Budjga people of the district and the keeper of the soil and rain-maker. Her chieftainship is also inexorably intertwined with the Mtoko chieftainship of the Mapatswe house of the VaBudjga via ancestral spirits. Until then, only two white people had ever been admitted to her presence. She agreed to meet Dave, who was groomed for his meeting with the *mambokadzi*. He learned the correct way of clapping in her honour, found out that he had to remove his shoes, belt, watch and

other European paraphernalia, that nothing red must be brought into her presence, that he must speak to her only through one of her counsellors and other matters of etiquette.

Dave said that the atmosphere in her reception hut was awesome. He felt an intense spirituality – in a strange way akin to what one may experience in an ancient cathedral. The wrinkled woman with rheumy eyes had an astonishing presence. He told the *mambokadzi* about the aims of his agricultural programme, his plan to restore the vleis, and of measures to be taken to diminish soil erosion. Chief Charewa gave him her blessing. Her words of parting were: ‘Look after my people, look after my soil!’

One of the first projects that Dave subsequently undertook with the people was to construct an earth dam wall at the outflow of the Madzonga vlei. The resultant dam was stocked with fish. The worst gullies were repaired. Within a few years the vlei recovered. The birds returned. The reeds reappeared in profusion. *Bonde*-making resumed and the mats were sold at the markets in Salisbury townships. Over time, more and more people were eager to learn from him also how to increase the yields in their fields. They began to listen to the Demonstrators too, including Fani Mango.

Dave Ford also managed to find sponsorship to pay for the local Agricultural Demonstrators to be trained as literacy teachers by ALOR. His men could now divide their time between teaching people to read and write and giving agricultural advice, depending on what people wanted to learn. Although he was promoted to Principal Agricultural Officer in 1975 and officially stationed at the provincial office, Dave continued to live in Mtoko and worked in Mudzi and Mtoko districts throughout the



Development Workers digging fertility trenches at Charewa

war. His family, however, moved to Salisbury, where his wife, Sue, could resume her career as a French-language teacher and his children could attend day school.

Dave's daily work in the war zones was, of course, not without danger. Travelling in a 'leopard' he was blown up by a landmine on the road to All Souls Mission, together with others. While no-one else was seriously injured, his hearing was permanently impaired. But from then on he seemed to be protected – whether by the *mambokadzi's* word or sheer 'luck' was never clear to him. For example, when the people of an area called on him to assist with harvesting fish from a stocked dam in the area, he would tell them to see to it that the road was clear of landmines. DEVAG had one set of fishing nets and had taught people how to use them. Dave then brought the nets, the people fished for a day, gave him back the nets in good order, whereupon he returned to base unharmed. Sometimes landmines reappeared in the road the day afterwards.

However, two of his extension workers were murdered near Nyamukapa School. Dave went to the scene with colleagues the next day. He says the atmosphere was utterly eerie. There were no people to be seen. There was no sound, not a single bird, not a breeze of air.



Fani Mango and I reached the gathering to find about 500 women present. Obviously they had been ordered by the DC to group, the presence of security force personnel in the area being an 'incentive' to do so. Nevertheless, I was received very cordially and greeted in person by the three women I knew. The first was Mrs T. Chikwizo, widow of the former chief, who had attended the chief's wives course in 1974 (and had learned to make a wedding cake); the second was Mrs M. Mbambe, an HED that I had trained in 1973; the third was Mrs P. Kamupita, who had attended an FAWC homecraft course at Domboshawa. I had renewed my acquaintance with them at the installation of the new Chief Chikwizo.

I could see that the women were comfortable with Community Adviser Mango. His presence also had the advantage that a strong voice could be pitted against the relentless gusts of wind, presaging the cloud bursts that were to follow. However, in view of the brewing storm, the women were understandably restless.

Mr Mango and I found it necessary to stand on top of the mound of the Keep, which was in the process of being constructed, to reach the multitudes. I was once again glad that I was wearing a maxi skirt. Many of the listeners pressed close and ended up at all levels up the side of

the embankment. This irreverent treatment of a semi-military installation caused much merriment among the women but raised some eyebrows among the armed personnel and construction management.

In competition with the elements, I explained the purpose of my visit in some detail until the elements triumphed. I then proposed that those women who were members of clubs come to one side: I would explain more to them and they could pass on the information to their friends later. This was done. Sensibly, about 250 women took the opportunity to disperse immediately. While our sub-meeting of 26 women deliberated, about half of the remaining women also went home.

When the sub-group had no further questions we joined those women who had remained. I asked Mrs Mbambe to explain what had been discussed. She did this very ably in the form of what women would term an 'encouragement speech', extolling the merits of going on a course at Domboshawa, where you learned such a lot, met women from many other parts of the country, got more food at every meal than you could eat, and slept in real beds.

Arrangements were made: I offered twenty-five places to women from the Chikwizo area on the course starting on 9 March. Women Adviser Mrs Chibisa would meet with Mesdames Mbambe, Chikwizo and Kamupita at Chikwizo Mission on 14 February to make final arrangements and distribute travel warrants for the course participants. Both Women Advisers would meet them the day before the start of the course and travel with them to Domboshawa. Mentally I made the following prediction: a few women from Msau would attend the course, none from Kondo, but a fair number from Chikwizo. As it turned out, seventeen came from Msau and Kondo (mostly from Msau) and twenty-seven came from Chikwizo. The Women Advisers handed their own travel warrants to the two 'extras'.

As Fani Mango and I travelled back to the district station the thunderstorm broke, engulfing our vehicle in a torrent of water. At times we had to stop for lack of visibility; lightning dramatically illuminated the landscape at intervals. Thunder and the pelting of the rain made any further conversation impossible. The vehicle leaked above my seat.



As soon as I had returned from my recruitment exercise, I conducted a two-week refresher course for twenty-three Women Advisers from the three Mashonaland provinces.⁷ Participants included 'my' thirteen from

⁷ It was actually the 1974 refresher, which had been postponed to 20-31 January 1975.

Mashonaland East and ‘my’ four from Mashonaland West, plus six from ‘Dorienne’s’ Mashonaland Central. While I designed the course and wrote much of the teaching material, Dorienne gave great assistance throughout. We enjoyed being together and appreciated the opportunity for leisurely discussions of our respective work over lunch. We felt fortunate: as the Mashonaland provincial offices were all still situated in Salisbury, we were less isolated than the officers in other provinces. Dorienne also held the fort when I had to attend the DC’s conference and when I travelled to Chikwizo.

Refresher courses provided Women Advisers with a wonderful opportunity to be together for two weeks. Much time was spent in informal discussions (‘sharing ideas’, they called it) and strengthening friendships. Each got the material for two uniforms for the year and they sewed these themselves in the evenings (with the assistance of our skills trainer, Miss Sylvia Muvandi) and relaxed talk flowed freely.

Miss Wilson always personally interviewed each of the Women Advisers, in the presence of the provincial officer, thereby keeping in contact with them. During each such encounter she enquired about the achievements of women in each Women Adviser’s work area, asked the Women Adviser what she saw as her work successes, and gave her the opportunity to speak about both work-related and personal problems. These conversations were never hurried. She listened to every Women Adviser with full attention; none left without receiving a compliment about her work. These interviews usually took up two full days of each refresher course, during which, lessons had to be given by someone other than the provincial officer.

There were further opportunities to discuss work problems. Usually, early on in the course, the Women Advisers were divided into three groups to list the difficulties that they wanted to discuss, and then we discussed them in plenary sessions. Sometimes only information had to be given. If an expert was needed to answer specific queries or to give advice, she or he was brought in. There were often problems of work-related interpersonal relationships, of group dynamics among fieldworkers or within interest groups.

When the war moved into their work areas the nature of the problems they discussed between themselves and with me changed dramatically. There were usually a few difficulties concerning ‘conditions of service’. Concerns about the status of women, both within the home and within the community, cropped up early in our working relationship, though. These included property relations within marriage and at divorce, and the unfairness of inheritance laws as regards widows.

By this course, my third refresher and the first that I had planned



Women Advisers Mashonaland East, 1975, with Maia Chenaux-Repond

Left to right: Jean Chirimuta (Mrewa); Naomi Shekede (Marandellas); Louisa Nhavira (Marandellas); Colleen Goto (Wedza); Lydia Psuura (Mudzi); Margaret Chitumba (Wedza); Norah Chitekwe (Mtoko); Idah Gurupira (Mtoko); Bertha Chibisa (Mudzi);
Front row: Dinah Nyakabau (Mrewa); Lucy Mukambiwa (Goromonzi); Susan Sakuringwa (Wedza)

and conducted myself,⁸ civic affairs came to the fore. I gave the Women Advisers some lessons on central government to reinforce what they had learned in 1973, but in view of the fact that women in TTLs were wanting to learn about councils (at least in the 'peaceful' areas of Mashonaland South), the bulk of the entire course was devoted to local government. They did a pre-test on councils, had lessons on their structure, function and mode of operation from Mr Hatendi, a trainer from the Branch of Community Development Training (BCDT) stationed at Domboshawa. Then they had to research and prepare a talk on an aspect of local government of their choice and give a short lesson on it to fellow course participants. At the end of this training they were given a test. The majority had gained significantly on their scores between the pre-tests and post-tests. I felt satisfied that these Women Advisers were now well equipped to advise women on how to approach councils for the assistance they wanted for their various projects.

The BCDT produced good and pithy handouts on various aspects of community development and local government – one-page A4 handouts with the text in English and Shona printed back-to-back – which we stapled together into a 'booklet'. Such aspects as the role of various actors in the council, the committees, budgets, financial statements, etc., were covered, but apparently not the council warrant (its constitution). Each African Council had its own warrant, drawn up at the time it was instituted. I had to do the research on the contents of each of the warrants myself after the course, as the franchise was stipulated therein. I learned to my dismay that the qualifications specified for voting and for being elected as councillor in most council warrants excluded women!

For example, in TTLs the warrant for Sanyati Council specified: 'adult males resident in the council area'; the warrant for Chiota Council specified: 'all ratepayers in the council area' (the head of household, male, was taxed). In the APAs, one warrant enfranchised 'registered owners or lessees of land', another, again, 'adult male tax-payers'. In five of the thirty-four councils in Mashonaland South, the councillors were appointed, most likely by the DC on the advice of the chief. I concluded that in these cases a possibility of influencing the ministry to appoint women's representatives existed. However, women in the council area would have to be thoroughly prepared if they wanted to take part in local government affairs. Women wanting to come forward as councillors would have to be groomed. We could not afford to have the first such 'experiment' flop. There were only three councils in Mashonaland South that had

⁸ The first two, held at the end of 1973, had been conducted by Nancy Laws, our former Training Officer.

enfranchised women, and in only one of these three areas did we have a Women Adviser. This was Uzumba Council, in a critically sensitive area, and thus might well have been on the brink of collapse. I needed to give this whole question much more thought.

It was time to turn my attention to the teaching of civic affairs in the field. Discussions with John Brown, head of the community education teams of the BCDT, yielded immediate results: I learned from him that one of the teams – consisting of Mr T.M. Zengeya, or Mr L.A. Hatendi, or Mr J. Chitsenga, each with an assistant trainer – was to visit various TTLs in the province (Chiota, Sanyati, Wedza, Chinyika, Mtoko, Chinamora, Ngezi and Seke) later in the year. The opportunity to have groups of women taught by these experienced teachers was too good to miss.

John Brown was willing to reserve Wednesdays for women's training on 'The Purpose of Councils and How Councils Work' if I could organize a schedule and venues. The PC, Bob Woollacott, supported me and sent circulars to the relevant DCs under his own signature, asking them to instruct Women Advisers to group women at suitable points on the agreed dates. He even included a note to say that it would be good for Community Advisers to attend the sessions 'to pick up ideas on content and method'.

Bicycle repairs

Women Advisers moved around their work areas mostly on bicycles, although they were allowed to take buses, where they were available, for long distances and were reimbursed for the fare. Naturally the bumpy roads and bush paths necessitated many repairs, so, to make Women Advisers even more self-reliant, I put 'bicycle repairs' on the course programme. Some brought their own bicycle for an overhaul. John Chitsenga, a Mobile Training Unit Operator in the BCDT, gave the practicals with sensitivity and gusto, though teaching 'bicycle repairs' was certainly not part of his job description.

Ever keen on statistics, I bought a kilometre counter for each Women Adviser as a little gift. I wanted to know what distances they cycled in an average month. Alas, I never did get much information out of them: on the sandy, dusty roads, the counters did not last long.



John Chitsenga shows
Colleen Goto (Wedza) and
Dinah Nyakabau (Mrewa)
how to fit a kilometre counter

Obviously I wrote to the Women Advisers also. Our arrangements worked: women flocked to the lessons on local government in great numbers. The trainers reported enthusiastically on the evident desire of women to learn. Between February and June, Women Advisers grouped women at twenty-four venues, and 1,412 attended the Local Government Awareness sessions. The Women Advisers asked for a further round of training, and those whose work area had not been included for initial rounds. By the end of the year, 2,954 women had taken part in one-day council awareness sessions.



The 4th of February 1975 brought the first of a series of visits by the provincial officers to district stations, initiated by the Provincial Agricultural Officer, Piet Jordaan. It was a positive initiative to weld us into – and to make us visible as – a provincial team. The first station was Mrewa. PC Bob Woollacott accompanied us, introduced us to the ‘District Development Team’, which included administrative officers and fieldworkers, i.e. Extension Assistants, Community Advisers and Women Advisers. He impressed upon all the importance of team work. After his introductory talk, the content of the programme was set as follows:

- The Necessity for Development and Increased Production (P. Jordaan)
- The Need for Agricultural Staff and Farmer Training (D. Ford)
- The Integration of Agricultural and Co-operatives Staff on the Promotion of Marketing and Supply (R. Pryce)
- The Role of Women’s Clubs (M. Chenaux-Repond)
- The Role of Councils (L. Rix or P. Sharples)
- The Role of Young Farmers Clubs (L. Johnson)

Needless to say I ignored the heading of the topic assigned to me and took the opportunity to point out – not for the first time in my career – that I was *not* the Provincial Women’s Club Organizer and that the Women Adviser was *not* the District Women’s Club Organizer, as the title of my talk that had been put on the programme by Piet Jordaan suggested, but that we were involved in *all* aspects of community development.

I gave details of the various aspects of development we were involved in and the types of interest groups we worked with, hardly mentioning women’s homecraft clubs. I hoped that my fellow provincial officers and district administrative staff would eventually take note. (The black fieldworkers actually knew this very well, even if their white seniors refused to grasp it.)

Identical training meetings followed at weekly intervals at Mtoko/Mudzi, Wedza, Marandellas and Goromonzi district stations. I repeated my message at all of them.



On 23 February I welcomed the women from Msau/Kondo to the first Mudzi look-and-learn course at Domboshawa and, on 9 March, the women from Chikwizo who came for the second such course. My objectives for the two courses were to

- establish contact and trust between women from these areas, myself and the Women Advisers;
- discuss problems and advantages of having been resettled and to identify felt needs on which to base possible programmes;
- provide participants with training useful in their home areas.

The programme included needlework (which I could expect participants to enjoy), nutrition (a whole day with Jean Zulu), prevention of diseases (malaria, cholera, typhoid), environmental hygiene, community development, the role of a Woman Adviser, several problem-solving sessions, and a session on how women's clubs could benefit women. There were films in the evening – some entertaining, some showing aspects of development elsewhere. The needlework included making a cravat to take to their husbands as a gift and, the highlight, a fetching hat for themselves made from fabric with large green-and-white checks and with some ingenious smocking.

The lessons of the first few days led up to the highlight of the course at the beginning of the second week. We travelled by bus to Old Umtali Mission, not far from Umtali, on the Umtali-Inyanga road. The women sang most of the way. All wore their green-and-white hats, though, once home, they reserved them for special occasions. At meetings in their home



Discussing water harvesting
at Old Umtali Mission



The butchery in the back yard
at Old Umtali Mission

areas I always recognized the women who had been on the two 'Mudzi Courses' from afar by their green-and-white checked and smocked hats.

Old Umtali Mission had novel and exciting rural-development technology on display and in use. A member of staff explained everything in detail, with patience and humour. Nobody was afraid to ask questions. We looked at methods of water harvesting and storage, at vegetable growing in fertility trenches, at the 'butchery in the backyard'. We had a splendid, filling lunch. On the first course, as we returned by bus, the women eagerly discussed the new ideas.

During the second course, as we stood in the grass together at the mission, awaiting the last outdoor demonstration, I was suddenly overcome by a crushing feeling of emotional pain and loneliness. I had no idea why. On our journey home, the women did not sing. Asked why, they said they

Jean Zulu

Jean Zulu was a freelance nutrition trainer and a flamboyant personality. She had formerly been employed by the Ministry of Health but found the bureaucracy 'tiresome'.

She started her day's instruction on our course by sending the women out into the bush that surrounded the training centre, asking them to bring back any indigenous plant that could be eaten. At first the women were reluctant and came back with practically nothing. Jean Zulu sent them out again. She knew well what the problem was. Women did not want to be seen as 'so poor' and 'so backward' that they had to rely on indigenous plants gathered from the veld.

A most interesting lesson followed on the nutritional and medicinal value of the plants that had been reluctantly brought in, interspersed with reminders to take pride in one's culture and in the traditional knowledge that was rapidly being lost by those who went to school. After this introduction, which I thoroughly enjoyed myself, her lessons were 'more standard'.

From Jean I learned of the nutritional value of 'black jacks', a weed notorious in every Rhodesian garden, and that the leaves (rich in iron) actually made quite a pleasant vegetable. Alas, I could not enthuse my family to eat the weed.

Jean, in her late twenties, was happily single and childless, which at her age was quite a disgrace in the view of African society and a worry to her family. 'No man will ever pay *lobola* for me,' she announced. 'Do you think I want to be oppressed?'

I remember an evening when I invited her to dinner, together with a few white friends who were by now comfortable with inter-racial contact. She arrived an hour late with a temporary boyfriend in tow. An extra setting had to be put in place and they had to share the steak I had grilled for Jean, as the boyfriend had not been anticipated. Possibly sensing that I was rather surprised at the calibre of the man she had brought, she said merrily to me as she got into the driver's seat of her car to leave: 'He's not really suitable for a long-term relationship, is he?'

were tired. I let it be. They started singing some hymns softly as we neared Domboshawa. Back in the provincial office I heard of a war incident in their area in which three men were killed.

In her annual report, Women Adviser Bertha Chibisa made the following comment:

It was very difficult in my area since January 1975 to start any project, because of conditions. But we had the Chikwizo show at Nyamande School. I never thought that women will come to the show, because many women and men were beaten. Two boys were shot to death near Nyamande. The Community Adviser, the Supervisor [of the Agricultural Demonstrators] and myself continued to encourage the people to do their show, so there would be something good.

We had a course at Domboshawa for two groups from Chikwizo and Mkota. These were organised by Mrs Chenaux-Repond. While at Domboshawa the women learnt to sew. They made their own hats and cravats for their husbands, which pleased them, and had other lessons. Then we went to Manicaland. The women learnt a lot about many projects and were so interested. They saw a butchery-in-the-backyard and were given a kind of *muriwo* [leaf vegetable] which is good for rabbits to take home and try to grow it.

The time we were there they showed so much interest in projects and clubs, but when they came back to their homes, they found three men were killed. Nobody knows who killed them, and they were so much afraid, they dropped everything they learnt.

I am very glad to be able to add that later, by 1976, although 'conditions' had got much worse, women were implementing some of the innovations they had learned about at Old Umtali Mission.



The several organizations of women's clubs to which individual clubs could affiliate (represented in the co-ordination committee, WGL) were losing contact with their clubs in the sensitive districts. Their representatives, the African trainers included, no longer travelled there. Postal contact ceased to be reliable as club leaders moved and no longer used their old addresses. As a result WGL, whose committee meetings I attended as regularly as possible, decided to conduct courses at Domboshawa and other Salisbury centres specifically for women in sensitive areas. The first

series of one-week courses for twelve women per course was sponsored by David Whitehead. Participants were taught to cut out a dress, to sew it and to fit it to themselves.

I was asked if I would do the recruiting, via the Women Advisers. In peaceful times and areas, such a request would never have been made or accepted. Women's organizations preserved their 'independence from government' by doing their own recruiting. They felt that this was no longer possible in the war areas. Thus the women's organizations and I decided to work even more closely together than before.

The recruiting entailed much administrative work. Invitation forms were channelled through me to the Women Advisers, who advertised the courses to current club members (or past members where clubs had collapsed) and returned completed applications and course fees to me. Acceptance notifications were again channelled through me. In Mtoko and Mudzi districts most clubs were affiliated either to the FAWC or the CWC. Both organizations accepted that Women Advisers would do their best to have those club members who would go on the courses elected by area general meetings. If these were no longer functioning, they would contact area committees. Where those also no longer met, they would themselves choose women who, in their opinion, were most likely to benefit from and share the knowledge gained with others, even if they were not women's club members, or if their clubs were not affiliated.⁹ Women Advisers in Mtoko and Mudzi districts would endeavour to obtain an optimal spread between members of FWAC and CWC. We all agreed that we had to be flexible for the benefit of all.

Although area committees were by now virtually defunct, Women Advisers in Mtoko, Mudzi and Mrewa (Uzumba only) managed to recruit a total of thirty-two current or past club members to go on the first three dress-making courses. They had done their best to call women together for the specific purpose of electing representatives to go on these. CWC, FAWC and unaffiliated clubs were represented. It was no small achievement considering the circumstances.

⁹ Women's clubs in Mrewa District did not affiliate to any organization – a curious development, since Helen Mangwende, the wife of the former Chief Mangwende, had been instrumental in founding the FAWC.



At the end of April 1975 my Provincial Commissioner, Bob Woollacott, was promoted to Deputy Secretary (Community Development). Lionel G. Leach took over as PC Mashonaland East on 8 May, when Bob left for head office. I was sorry to see him leave: he had given me a completely free rein in my work and was unstinting with moral support on the occasions I needed it.

During April, Debbie Allan, who had been PCDOW for the Midlands Province for almost a year, resigned from the Section in order to be with her mother, who, for various family reasons, needed her support, and joined the district administration in Marandellas as a Cadet. I was sorry indeed to lose her as a fellow PCDOW, but she continued to give me personally, and our Section, invaluable support in her new post. At about the same time, however, our Section was blessed with the appointment of three new colleagues.

Adaire Robbins was signed up in April and posted to Gwelo to replace Debbie Allan. Adaire often made me laugh. She was very fervent, and to motivate women she sometimes led them in sing-songs in American cheerleader fashion – something I could never even attempt to do. At the beginning of May, Brigitte de Chelain was appointed to the Victoria Province post after being stationed with me for a few days of induction training. She was much more sober-minded than Adaire, though both were young, straight from university and full of enthusiasm.

The exception as regards youth was Ruth Baker, who exuded maturity but had a mischievous smile. She was signed up for Matabeleland North after spending a short period with me during June. In contrast to all of us, she was very experienced and was an extraordinary woman. I quote extracts from an article that appeared in *The Herald* at the time:

From London, she had been a full-time house-wife and mother. With her two children grown up she resolved to branch out.

Aged forty-seven she obtained a state scholarship to do a degree in philosophy at the University of South Wales. Still hungry for more knowledge she did her Master's degree at the University of London.

Interested in developing countries and adult education, she then applied to the British Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), was accepted and spent two years in New Guinea as an adult

educator, organizing both correspondence courses and classes.

VSO volunteers are usually young people, keen on adventure. Ruth Baker was in her fifties, but did not mind doing an interesting job in return for accommodation and a modest pocket money at this stage of her life.

After two years she returned to Britain and took on a paid post at an adult education centre in Buckinghamshire. In 1973, as her feet began to itch again, she applied for a volunteer post in Africa and arrived at Rancho House for a two-year assignment.

‘Too many people making remarks about what should be done in developing countries,’ she said. ‘I would rather get involved.’

I was fascinated by her story. It was a pity that we provincial officers had so little opportunity for contact, for I would have been most interested to learn how she approached her work in Matabeleland, what needs women articulated there, and what programmes she introduced in response. I cannot research it now, as all the records of my colleagues’ work in other provinces appear to have been lost. Probably no other colleague brought as much relevant experience to the job as she did. Generally, on account of our low salaries, we could only attract young women who had just left university.



In April 1975 the first four Development Workers were stationed in Mashonaland East, as follows:

Mudzi: Makaha PV: Annah Mugumisi and Grace Makwembere

Mrewa: Nyakasoro PV: Eugenia Machiridza and Grace Nhumba

My complement of staff was now twenty-two: seventeen Women Advisers, one Township Worker and four Development Workers.

Development Workers were allocated housing in a Protected Village. Their quarters differed widely in comfort – from a tin hut in the blazing sun in Chingaruru PV to a cool thatched cottage that had probably been built earlier for a different purpose and now found itself incorporated into Nyakasoro PV. They were paid by the African Development Fund. Their wages were between \$35 and \$40 per month, plus a ‘sensitive area allowance’ of 25 cents per day, including weekends. They brought their own modest belongings to the Keeps. They were given two weeks’ leave after their first few weeks in the job so that they could go home to assure their families that they were safe.

I was only able to visit Annah Mugumisi and Grace Makwembere

in Makaha almost three months later, on 24 June. An earlier trip had been booked in May, but the ADF plane had broken down. Women Adviser Bertha Chibisa, responsible for the areas of Chiefs Nyakuchena, Nechombo and Chikwizo, also met us there.

A women's club and a girls' club had already been formed in the meantime. The Development Workers, like the Women Advisers, were self-starters. I blessed Penny Ross for the excellent and inspiring training she gave them and for her intuitive selection of the right personalities. We had been worried at first that Development Workers would have difficulty in being accepted by mature women on account of their youth, but this was not the case. They all experienced acceptance problems at the beginning. How quickly they overcame them depended on their tact, their personalities, factors in the community in which they were placed and, I learned in due course, much on the attitude of local guerrilla commanders.

Village trunks

At the beginning of their placement, Development Workers were issued with a 'village trunk' – one like the black metal trunk that children took to boarding schools to store their belongings.

This contained basic items to start teaching homecraft skills – such as wool, knitting needles, crotchet cotton and crotchet hooks, scissors, tape measures, some fabric, needles and pins, a charcoal iron, a few patterns – and a folder with a checklist and lined paper on which the use to which the materials were put was to be recorded.

A paraffin stove was also provided. The workers took their own blankets, clothes and toiletries, and, thus equipped, the young women went forth into the unknown.



Makaha was situated about fifty kilometres from Mtoko (though in Mudzi District), along the dirt road past All Souls Mission, past the former Makosa Township towards Chikwizo Mission. It housed forty-one kraals under three headmen and had a population of roughly 3,500, with about 700 women and 500 men; over half the population comprised youngsters and children. As Annah and Grace visited the women in their homes to get mutually acquainted, they gathered that many people had first believed that they had been forced to move into a PV so that they could be conveniently killed by the security forces.

Once Annah and Grace had overcome the initial mistrust of the villagers, women and girls started visiting them in their rooms. Annah had decked hers out with posters on general nutrition, nutrition for pregnant mothers, the prevention and cure of kwashiorkor in weaned toddlers, and the prevention of common diseases. These evoked the visitors' curiosity and allowed her to give them explanations and impromptu lessons. 'They also tell friends about the pictures and this is how new ideas spread all over the village', she said. The two Development Workers also established a flourishing vegetable garden, which provided an opportunity for making acquaintances and having informal discussions while their large onions and tomatoes were being admired.

The Makaha people were not well integrated into a single community. They fell under two different chiefs: Nyakuchena and Nechombo. This caused difficulties at the beginning as women from different chieftainships did not want to join together in interest groups, lessons or any organized activity. 'Some families are well off and some are very poor, so to join them is very hard. The poor will be ashamed to join the rich, so it is up to me to help them to join together', Grace and Annah concurred.

Nevertheless, the two Development Workers were soon able to give informal lessons to small groups on child care, the prevention of diseases, personal hygiene to prevent and cure scabies, and other topics.

To their regret both workers were transferred to different villages in September 1975 and then back to Makaha in April 1976. Grace Makwembere left the Ministry in July 1977 to get married and Mavis Magaramombe from Morosi PV joined her a month later. Annah was not happy at being transferred around and lamented in her 1977 annual report about having to abandon projects or groups in their early stages when they still needed much fostering.

Nevertheless, by the end of 1977, several women's and girls' groups had formed in Makaha. Members had started making articles with materials provided in the 'village trunk' and then tried to raise club funds by selling them. However, they set their prices too high, so the woollen hats and

dressess were not bought and they had to adjust their pricing downwards. Later they were also given fabric by the DC's office. By now some groups had started to play netball and were competing with each other. The clubs had their own committees and responded to lessons in club management and handicrafts. In time, Annah hoped that she could encourage them to start projects like poultry-keeping; later a farming group and a playgroup came into being. Shopkeepers helped by saving materials that could be used for toy-making and by selling the farming group's surplus vegetables.

Annah Mugumisi had assembled a list of former voluntary workers and other women with leadership potential and with talents (including in clay work, mat-making, and children's stories and games) that they could share. However, the club leaders and voluntary workers of 'pre-PV times' were not yet ready to come forward. They had been disappointed when their 1975 show failed because of 'the situation'. We noticed again and again in our work that, when a project fails, those who were involved in it needed 'recovery time' before they could start again or start something new.

Two primary schools were situated two and three-and-a half kilometres away, respectively, but were very poorly attended. The Development Workers commented with consternation that neither the kraal heads nor most fathers appreciated the importance of education. Indeed, they felt that fathers should be forced to send their children to school.

By 1977 a village development committee had been formed under the guidance of the Keep commander, Eric Sherman, though it had only five (male) members. The women had not thought of asking for representation, but the chairman eventually asked the Development Workers to attend its meetings. The main needs that women had expressed to them by then were for a clinic within the village (the nearest was in Nyakuchena PV, five kilometres away), sufficient water (long queues were forming daily at the few water points), an adult literacy school, and help with buying ingredients such as flour and sugar for cookery lessons in their clubs.

In Nyakasoro I had already laid some groundwork for the Development Workers' arrival. I had last visited on 10 January and had assessed the potential for forming a women's club as high, as long as skills training became available. Eugenia Machiridza's and Grace Nhumba's arrival was welcomed.



On 1 May, with very little warning, I was assigned a new type of worker – a Women Adviser who was to work in a fast-developing urban area, Seki Township, and with her a new field of endeavour. Seki Township,

developed in the sandy Tribal Trust Land under Chief Seki, was in close proximity to Salisbury. By the end of 1975 it provided housing for a population of 8,000 and was projected soon to house 12,000. A goodly proportion of the male population was employed in the city. Because Seki Township was situated in a TTL, it was administered by Internal Affairs. Other townships near cities lay in European Land and were thus administered by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing.

Wyn Wilson decided to station a worker there, and transferred an experienced Women Adviser, Mrs Rebecca Guzha, who had previously been working in Bindura District, Mashonaland Central.¹ Mrs Guzha had to 'find her feet' unaided for the first month, as I was already committed elsewhere. Only on 5 June did Wyn Wilson and I meet at the Seki Township administrative office with the Township's superintendent, Mr A.G. Holder, and the District Administrator (Townships), Mr F.H. Dodd, stationed at head office, to discuss Mrs Guzha's intended role.

I myself was singularly unprepared for community development work in an urban area. I prepared to liaise with Bev Kirby, my counterpart in the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, which was responsible for such work in African townships in European urban areas. This I started a few months later.



Work in sensitive and non-sensitive districts proceeded very differently. I still had ambitions to do action research and to put my work 'on a more professional footing'.

I had made myself an interview checklist for supportive/supervisory field visits to Women Advisers. Looking at it now, it seems incredibly detailed and picky. It has twenty-eight major headings, with up to ten sub-headings under each. I still have the completed interview with Women Advisers Naomi Shekede and Louisa Nhavira of Chiota TTL in Marandellas District. They yielded seventeen typed pages of information, some of it quantified.

The interview results demonstrate the thorough knowledge that Women Advisers had of their work area. Such interviews, I thought, would give me a comprehensive picture of what was going on in terms of development work in their work area, the outside agents involved – government officers and field staff, the missions and churches, the voluntary organizations, the

¹ Women Advisers were usually not transferable. It is possible that Mrs Guzha was transferred for her personal security.

local formal and informal leadership, interest groups, projects, voluntary workers, and so on. The interviewing process also showed me the trust that the Women Advisers and I had established between us. I got a lot of 'strictly off the record' information and we had a great deal to laugh about.

I felt that such detailed interviews would need to be undertaken only every two or three years; each took two days to complete. These, together with the regular monthly reports, the Women Advisers' annual programme plans and other narrative reports, would have provided an excellent basis for action research and would have enabled us to quantify the results we achieved. Action research, however, was not to be. I always aimed for the stars, but seldom even reached the moon ...



From 28 April to 9 May 1975, I ran my first course for pre-school teachers. It proved to be one of the highlights of my entire training career. It was based on the training needs identified on my support visits to the Chinamora pre-schools during July the year before. The young girls in charge of the children were Grade 7 school-leavers and had had hardly any training to speak of for this work. Understandably, they had no idea about early childhood education, nor had the mothers of the children or the committees who administered the pre-schools. I doubt that the headmasters of the schools where groups were located had much idea either.

As a result, each girl had far too many children to look after, and she kept them under control by drill, drilling them in Shona children's rhymes and English nursery rhymes, and teaching them to write the alphabet and numbers up to ten. They also played a few games, but otherwise there was pretty little that would stimulate the child's intellect and certainly nothing to develop its curiosity or creativity. Indeed, curiosity was rather discouraged. The concept of 'free play' was completely absent. There were no toys of any sort, not even the traditional clay animals or wire toys that young boys make (mainly cars) and play with at their homes.

As a prelude to the course, I conducted interviews, collecting information about the girls and the administration of the pre-schools. Mothers paid 25 cents per child per month. Sometimes they did not pay, but children were not sent away if they did not do so. As a result the income of the schools was irregular. Sometimes the mothers' committees decided to buy *mahewu* (a commercial protein drink) for the children during morning break. This, of course, was commendable but it could be done to the detriment of the pre-school teacher's wages. Conditions at the various centres differed. The girls had 20 to 45 children to look after five mornings

a week and were paid between \$2.00 and \$5.00 a month, regardless of the number of children they were responsible for. Some were paid irregularly. Despite the poor conditions, without exception they wanted to continue with this work.

How do you transform young girls with only primary-school education, who have never had the benefit of a nursery school themselves, into nursery-school teachers within two weeks? It is, of course, simply not possible, but my course certainly effected some changes, as follow-up visits to the pre-schools in later months showed.

My interest in pre-school education had developed when my own girls were small, and all the *bastle* (handicrafts) I did with them – with Sue and Caroline, in particular – and later with children of domestic workers at the Highlands Presbyterian Church, now came in handy. The course was carefully planned; each session had clear objectives. I observed, I evaluated each one, recorded what worked and what did not, with suggestions on how to tackle differently next time what did not work.

I received enormous help from others in running the two-weeks' course. Joan Mathewman, Deputy Director of the Council of Social Services, came to give a talk on the concept of pre-school education. Members of the recently formed Playgroup Association of Rhodesia (PAR) shared their enthusiasm – two different members came on each of seven days to give a lesson. All of them gave their services free of charge. Debbie Allan had persuaded her DC in Marandellas that she needed to attend this course in order to guide pre-school committees in their district in the future. She was with me throughout and saw to the formidable logistics. Women Adviser Lucy Mukombiwa – who had alerted me to the fact that the mushrooming pre-schools in Chinamora, and the committees that ran them, needed help – was also present throughout. Mrs Chinamora, an HED that I had trained, acted as skills trainer in a voluntary capacity, in charge of making dolls and dolls' clothes. The two women leaders participated fully and looked after the young trainees after hours, making toys and play equipment with them late into the night. At the 'open day' two 'guests of honour' (Miss Beck and Miss Nhari) gave an instructive talk to assembled guests.

On the first morning of the course, the trainees were given a lesson on 'How Councils Work', including which committee was responsible for what, how councils make budgets, and how to approach them for financial assistance. They then started work on the giant, toddler-size doll and its clothes. Dressing it, the children could learn how to close and undo buttons, tie laces, deal with press studs, etc.

From the second day onwards we proceeded as follows: We first viewed

a short film, made in England, that the PAR had lent me and included 'water-play', 'play with clay', 'children figuring out things by themselves' and 'how to set out a play area'. We discussed what we observed in the film and then viewed it a second time. This was followed by a theoretical lesson. The first covered child development in successive age groups. On each of the further days, two members of the PAR gave talks on topics such as how to stimulate creativity, curiosity, the value of free play, etc.

For each session the PAR ladies brought appropriate educational toys and apparatus that they had made from waste materials for their own playgroups at little cost and left them as samples. To give an idea, I will describe just a few of them: an egg box made a perfect sorting tray for all sorts of colourful tokens (seeds were discouraged, for obvious reasons); picture books and sewing cards were made from cardboard gleaned from cereal or washing-powder boxes and the like, decorated with pictures cut from magazines; the famous Rhodesian cardboard cigarette box (holding 30 or 50 cigarettes) proved ideal for storing the pieces of cardboard puzzles; containers and funnels for water-play were cut from various discarded plastic bottles. I myself had collected useful waste materials from friends for weeks in preparation for the course. PAR members brought more.

Health matters were not neglected. We had a lesson by the Chinamora Health Assistant on sanitation, on the importance of clean water, and on the symptoms of contagious diseases to look out for. Safety precautions were stressed – among others, those connected with the 'hole in the ground, long-drop toilets'. If the cement slab was neglected and the edges crumbled, the hole sometimes got too big and a small child could fall in.

Every day, just before tea, we set up a play area. I brought the ingenious fold-up shop that Rolf had made for our girls years before: it was big enough for children to stand in upright at the counter. To the shop we added a water-play area (on the first day) and then each morning the toys or apparatus that the trainees had made the night before. Twenty children from Molife pre-school were bussed to Domboshawa, accompanied by two mothers, every day. They were let loose in the play area for an hour and a half, while the trainees were taught to sit and observe unobtrusively, making notes, which we later discussed. At the end of the play session, the children were guided in tidying up and given a drink and a slice or two of bread with peanut butter before being bussed home. Subdued at first, they soon became adventurous and inventive.

It was fascinating to watch how they 'discovered' each toy, figured out smartly what to do with educational apparatus that they had never seen before in their lives – much more quickly than any adult to whom such things were shown. After lunch I swung into action, teaching the girls how

to make toys – a different one each day – reliving my youth and my time with my own small children, and having fun.

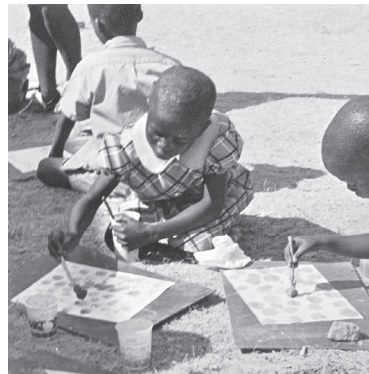
Apart from making toys in the evening (and completing the giant doll over the weekend), the girls had other home work. (An HED was once heard to say: ‘If you are going on a course with Mrs Chenaux-Repond you are going to *work*, not to rest! But you really *learn* things!’) They were each given a copy of *Dambanavana* [Play with Children] by Shirley Dock, President of the PAR, a copy of my own *Kugadzira Midori* [Making Toys], and copies of the *Homecraft Magazine* with articles on pre-school work. Each girl, at some stage, had to give us a three-minute talk on what she had learned by reading the books.

We had a session devoted to listing and discussing problems connected with the girls’ work, of course. Some problems we were able to resolve on the spot. The rest, together with my observations in the field, provided me with issues to touch upon in my ‘Open Day Speech’. The second-last day of the course took the form of an Open Day, lasting from 10.00a.m. to 4.30p.m. I did want to cause changes in the community as well in order that the trainees would be better supported on their return from the course, so the following attended: Twelve representatives of seven different pre-school committees, six headmasters of schools, two representatives of Chinamora Council (Chairman and Secretary), three leaders of the YWCA (firmly established in this TTL), as well as two leaders of FAWC.

Also present were the two formidable women (occasionally glaring at each other) who were vying for the control of all Chinamora pre-schools – Mrs Chirwa, a headmistress and member of YWCA, and Mrs Mukweshu, a member of FAWC and, in contrast to her rival, a local person. I managed to persuade a man who told me that I must force the two women to settle their differences ‘here and now, in the presence of all the guests as witnesses’, to hold his peace until the matter could be discussed and resolved at community level.



Chinamora pre-school after my course





With Mrs Chirwa, Mrs Mukweshwa and pre-school children in Chinamora

Guests had the opportunity to watch the children at free play with a selection of apparatus made during the course, to observe the pre-school helpers (teachers) observing the children, intervening only if there was a fight, and taking notes. We displayed a proposed time-table of activities for a week on a huge sheet of brown paper. Guests viewed the exhibition of educational toys that we had made. The exhibition table was manned so that visitors could ask questions – as we had foreseen, most did not have any idea what the odd things we had made might be used for.

Miss D. Beck, Principal of St Nicholas Nursery School Teachers' Training School in Highfield, spoke about their three-year training course for certified nursery school teachers. Miss T. Nhari, trained at St Nicholas, spoke about her experiences during training and later as a pre-school teacher and gave an impromptu lesson on a programme suitable for a rural pre-school.

After a promise of tea and cake at the end of the day, I gave my speech. It was long, for it was intended to be a lesson for the members of the community who were attending. The Open Day had been a great success. Not one of the guests left early – not even any of the men. And, most importantly, most pre-school committees made changes after the trainees' return. At several pre-schools, fathers were roped in to make play-ground equipment. Not all my suggestions were adopted, of course, but a significant number were.

My Open Day Speech at Chinamora

Chief Chinamora, Ladies of the pre-school committees, Headmasters, Council Chairman and Secretary, Community Adviser, Ladies and Gentlemen – I welcome you all most sincerely to the Open Day of our course for pre-school helpers.

This course grew out of an invitation – extended to me last July – to visit the pre-schools then existing in Chinamora and to advise on possible improvements.

During my visit on 15 July 1974, I was struck by two things (I have referred to them already at the Chinamora show, where I announced this course).

- the sense of responsibility shown by young girls in charge of children at the pre-schools,
- their almost total lack of training.

The girls themselves were very aware of their lack of training. Indeed, each one of them asked whether there would be a chance for them to get some training in pre-school work.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I cannot stress enough that pre-school work – properly understood – is WORK. This has been stressed by every trainer on the course, and has again been very ably stressed today by Miss Beck and Miss Nhari.

Older girls have always helped their mothers to look after the younger children in the family. However, this does not mean that you can place forty children in the care of one girl, pay her a few dollars a month, give the children an orange or a protein drink mid-morning, and call the result a pre-school!

In response to your request I have, in my capacity as Provincial Community Development Officer for Women (Ministry of Internal Affairs) organized and run a two-weeks' training course. This course was designed to

- help girls towards a better understanding of the ways in which the minds, senses, personalities and bodies of young children develop; and
- give the girls ideas on how to occupy children with activities that will help the children to develop their minds and senses, their ability to get on with others, and to get better control over their limbs, particularly their hands and fingers.

You are meeting the girls today after ten days of training in pre-school work. You have gathered from their talks some aspects of the work we covered together. You have also seen some samples of the play equipment the girls have made on the course – mostly from waste materials, things that other people would throw away. You have watched the children, borrowed from Molife pre-school, at play in some of the activities that the girls have learned to provide.

I stress again: the girls have had ten days of training in pre-school work. Some of them, months before, sat in in a crèche in town for two weeks. You have heard from Miss Beck about the training course for nursery-school teachers that lasts three years.

The girls will be doing their best with their new knowledge when they get back. However, the children placed in their care each day for some hours are not their responsibility alone. They are the responsibility of the community as a whole – above all, of their parents (both father and mother), the committee of mothers formed at every pre-school, and to some extent of the headmasters of the schools at which they are situated, as well as – one would hope – of the Chinamora Council.

I would like to make a few points about community responsibility, but first let me take you back to 15 July last year. When I visited the pre-schools then, I asked the mothers and members of committees at every pre-school I visited, 'Why pre-schools? Why do you want them?'

I was given the same answers wherever I went:

- Children who attend pre-school do better at school.
- We want to provide employment for some of the many girls who have left school.
- If a child attends pre-school, the mother is free to get on with her own work (knitting and crocheting, work in the fields or vegetable garden, selling tomatoes in town, etc.).

Let us consider these points one by one.

1. Children who attend pre-school do better at school.

If this is your aim, then parents and committees must have a closer look at

- the number of children each girl is expected to cope with; and
- the type of activity she is able to provide for each age group.

The right type of activity provided at a proper pre-school needs a lot of careful attention – careful attention to individuals and to small groups of children.

At pre-school, children are supposed to develop their intelligence, the dexterity of their fingers, their ability to control their feelings, etc., through PLAY, rather than through formal, regimented teaching.

This morning, you watched twenty children at play at various activities from 12.00 to 13.00, which is for one hour. What happened at 12.30?

All the mothers sat down on the stone wall over there and started talking among themselves – and they did not talk about what they had observed the children doing either! All the headmasters and other men went to stand under that tree and talked. The girls carried on unobtrusively supervising and observing the children at play.

Why did the mothers go and sit down? 'We were tired.'

You were tired?! After half an hour?! The pre-school teachers are expected – by you – to do this work for the whole morning, some for the whole day, for five days a week!

2. To provide employment for school-leavers.

If your aim is to provide employment for school-leavers, I suggest that the committees and parents look a little more closely at

- the amount you pay the girls;
- whether or not they get their money regularly;
- whether or not it is right that they sometimes get a little less than was agreed, because the committee wants to buy *mahewu* ...

3. The mother is free to get on with her own work

I am a mother myself. I have had small children. I know how great the need of a mother can be to know that her small child is in safe hands so that she can be free some times. That is all right.

However, the interests of your child must be paramount, and I'm afraid that 25 cents a month is not going to buy you all the three things you want out of a pre-school. Particularly not the first two. There needs to be far more community involvement!

Both parents could improve their children's pre-schools very much by getting involved. I say 'both parents', but I realize that, with many fathers away working in town, most responsibility will fall on the mothers. This is what parents could do:

- Mothers could collect the kind of waste materials that we have used to make play equipment on this course. Fathers working in town might even have easier access to such things.
- Both mothers and fathers could make play equipment.
- Fathers with skills in carpentry could make some of the outdoor equipment that one of the girls has told you about.
- Mothers could make dolls, soft toys, scrapbooks, mats for the children to rest on, and blankets.
- I suggest you add a new section to the Chinamora show – a section for toys and equipment for pre-schools! This would add a pleasant new interest to the chair-backs and doilies, etc., and to the agricultural produce that you are already so good at producing for your shows. Prizes could be awarded and the articles made could then be donated to the pre-schools.
- Both fathers and mothers could assist in fund-raising. Some of this is already being done – I am told that the baby show organized by mothers was a successful fund-raising project.
- Young Farmers Clubs are not going well in Chinamora. They could assist in many ways. Maybe a new project could give them new enthusiasm.
- There are girls' clubs being formed. Maybe these new clubs would be interested in making toys.

One would also hope that the Council – and I am looking straight at the Council Chairman! – would take a more active interest. Council could help finance many things – large play equipment and storage cupboards, for example. Council could think about providing the money for employing a qualified nursery-school teacher who could support and supervise all the pre-school helpers in the Council area. I appeal to women to invite councillors and fathers to come and visit the pre-schools to see what is being done.

A word of warning here: Playgroups, crèches, nursery schools and play centres in both European areas and African urban areas have to be registered, by law. In order to be registered they have to comply with certain regulations to safeguard the interests of the children. Registration is not so far required in the Tribal Trust Lands, and I don't think this will be done in the near future. However, it is perhaps wise to ask advice from your District Commissioner on this point and to find out what standards should ultimately be aimed at. Headmasters and councillors are perhaps in the best position to find out.¹

¹ I'm not sure why I told the headmasters and councillors to find out. As a matter of fact, it was the Women's Section that eventually worked out minimum standards for pre-schools in TTLs, in consultation with the Ministry of Education. These remained recommendations while I was with the Section.

Conclusion

I hope you have enjoyed your day with us. I thank you all sincerely for having given up a whole day to be with us today.

On behalf of the girls who attended the course, I would also like to thank Miss Beck for her interesting talk today on the training of Nursery School Teachers at St Nicholas, and Miss Nhari for her interesting talk on her own experiences there, and for her lesson on a programme suitable for pre-schools in a rural area.

I would like to thank Mrs Mukweshu, who attended the course as an observer, Women Adviser Mrs L. Mukombiwa, and Home Economics Demonstrator Mrs Chinamora, who helped with the course as a voluntary worker.

I would like to thank all the members of the Playgroup Association who came to give lessons. They, too, are voluntary workers!

And I would like to thank Miss Allan, without whose assistance this course could not have been run!

I now declare this Open Day closed, and I wish you all a safe journey home!

M. Chenaux-Repond

Provincial Community Development Officer (Women), Mashonaland East



I had to move on, give my attention to other areas. Lack of time, lack of time, lack of time ... Sometimes I wished I worked at district level so that I could give women's projects the follow-up attention they deserved. In Goromonzi District, after DC Charles Major left, there was never an officer who gave the women field staff proper support.

My pre-school teachers' course was pioneer work in the province. However, I was not the only pioneer. During 1976 Miss Joan Mathewman, representing the Rhodesian National Council for the Welfare of Children, and Sister Edna Trawford of the Methodist Church gave many short courses on pre-school education throughout the country. As far as I can remember, most concentrated on 'mother involvement'. Pre-schools administered by mothers sprang up in TTLs and in townships everywhere (and also in PVs) and these two women in particular responded to the need for the involvement and training of mothers of children who were attending.

While I held one more course for pre-school 'teachers' in November 1977 (as promised), and included the topic 'playgroups' in the refresher courses of my field staff, as soon as I discovered what Joan Mathewman and Sister Edna (and later Voy Youngleson on behalf of WGL) offered, I referred pre-school committees and mothers in general to them. It was, of

course, in the spirit of the task of a PCDO to provide links between women and voluntary organizations. I felt, however, that there was also a crying need for a one-month to three-month course for pre-school 'teachers/helpers'.

The leadership conflict between the two powerful figures of Chirwa and Mukwasha festered for several years. Both the development of pre-schools in Chinamora and this power struggle for their control would make a little case study of its own. While I interviewed both in depth and did conduct several meetings at community level, I certainly could not devote enough time to it and the conflict was not resolved before I left the province.

In the meantime, the council awareness training for rural women that I had arranged through the BCDT was proceeding in Mtoko, Marandellas, Wedza, Goromonzi and Gatooma districts. Between February and June the training days were attended by 1,418 women.

Obviously I was delighted at this interest shown in civic affairs! I did not have the time, however, to follow up on the initiative sufficiently to give Women Advisers and, through them, the women who had attended these awareness sessions the necessary support for them to close the communication gap between them and councils, to empower them to lobby and influence their respective councillors to give women's projects more active moral and financial support. I would have needed the support of a district officer in each district, so I decided on further rounds of training using the mobile unit.



Time was forever tight. On 3 June I wrote to Women Advisers (with a copy to DCs):

During the seminars I held with you in April and May most of you expressed disappointment at the infrequency of my supportive visits to the areas in which you work. Together we discussed my role, the way I allocate my time and why.

I am now planning my work for the rest of the year. Please note that I will be on leave from 15 September to 31 October 1975. During July and August I am planning to give a full day to every Women Adviser. Please write and tell me what day you would like me to visit and submit a programme for the day. Include those things you feel you need help with, things you are particularly proud of, people I should meet, problems and needs I should be made aware of, etc. Please submit a copy of your programme to your District Commissioner.



By mid-1975, Penny Ross, in charge of the initial training of Development Workers, also acquired responsibilities in the field. In order to train them appropriately, she needed intimate knowledge of the conditions that they were going to work in. Penny loved the fieldwork. Although Doriene was the provincial officer for Mashonaland Central and part of Mashonaland West (the former Mashonaland North) responsibility for some PVs in Centenary and Mount Darwin districts (Mashonaland Central) was given to Penny. Doriene could then concentrate on the PVs in Chiweshe and Madziwa. Penny recounted in May 2011:

We started off in the Valley area of the Centenary District, the Protected Villages being Sowe and Mzarabani. When I joined in September 1974, Sowe was already established and clearing and building was going on to create Mzarabani. Chiswite was the administrative centre, with Steve Cloete in charge, a quiet guy who stuttered and was more comfortable sitting on his haunches than on a chair – thoroughly ‘bush happy’. He enjoyed a great rapport with the African people. The Development Workers found it relatively easy to get established in these PVs, as many of the women seemed familiar with Women Adviser work and were not as affected by the terrorist situation as those in the Mount Darwin district. I can remember many happy times attending shows, cook-ins, etc. I was rarely conscious of tension and, of course, always loved the drive down into the Valley!

Then attention turned to our getting established in the Mount Darwin district. We fairly quickly posted DWs to Nembire and Dotito (above the escarpment) and Mukumbura (valley floor), and they visited Kaitano and Pachanza (valley floor) from time to time.

Penny received much support from agricultural officers:

Allan Nichols, agricultural officer at Mukumbura, was very good at taking ‘the girls’ with him when he had cause to go to other PVs and Keeps. Glen Yeomans, the Senior Agricultural Officer, was, to me, the real backbone and support of the DWs in the field.¹

¹ Glen Yeomans was awarded the Medal for Meritorious Service (Civil Division) (MSM) in 1973. He was known for his services to the Master Farmers programme and the national Good Farming Competition.

He was untiring in his encouragement of them, in supplying the seeds/seedlings that they needed for their projects (in the field, the DWs obviously worked very closely with the agricultural and health workers) and Glen is remembered with much affection and gratitude. He always came up with the goods, even when DCs and their staff were letting our field staff down time and time again as the war increasingly preoccupied their minds.

To a large extent, I was the only representative of the Section who visited the Development Workers [in this district], particularly as the war escalated, and I became their 'officer' to all intents and purposes. Dee [Dorienne], and sometimes Miss Wilson, would fly up to Mt Darwin and attend district meetings with me now and again, but they very rarely went into the field. Sometimes I drove (with or without an escort!), sometimes I flew with Ken Brown or with Russell Kilner. Later there was a youngster, Gary Mitchell, who joined the flying team.

One could say that my field of activity, in its war zoning, was the [western part of the] Operation Hurricane area.



Penny Ross (later Van der Linden), Training Officer, head office,
with Development Workers she had trained (1976)



Between July and September 1975, a young woman in her early twenties, Thandiwe Mangwenzi, was stationed with me. I loved her at first sight. Thandi had graduated in March 1975 as a Nursery Nurse from St Gabriel's in Bulawayo after a two-year training course. St Gabriel's functioned as a crèche, even taking in babies, as a nursery school, and as a training institute for crèche attendants in Rhodesia or for future nannies overseas. It was multiracial and had an excellent reputation. Miss Wilson was starting to develop a policy on pre-schools, and Thandi was stationed with me to assist with advice for the many pre-schools that were burgeoning in my work area. Thandi bore herself like a princess. Even my Provincial Commissioner, Lionel Leach, who was sometimes rather condescending with African women, was disarmed and treated her with the utmost respect.

Thandi first helped me in the office and, of course, read all my pre-school observations and my training and follow-up reports. We quickly became friends and she would tell me with dreamy eyes about her boyfriend, Ben, and what they talked about when sitting on the kopje near Hlekweni, a rural training centre run by Quakers in Matabeleland, where they had met. I was captivated because the young couple seemed to have such an open, communicative relationship between equals. 'He lets me be myself,' Thandi often said, sighing deeply, and I realized that he supported her dreams and wanted her to become whatever she felt capable of becoming. I wished that she could get further education. Given the chance she would go far.

I stationed Thandi at Nyakudya pre-school Chinamora TTL in Goro-monzi District from 6 to 13 August to observe, to give advice and to report back on this and on other pre-schools.

On the first day I observed the 'teachers' doing their work. I did not comment or correct them, I only watched. They finished at 12.00. After lunch I was hoping to meet with the pre-school committee. It was 4.30 before they turned up. I told them about my training and tried to make plans about what I would be doing with them while I was there. It wasn't easy.

This area has men with a lot of wives. These wives work in the gardens [growing tomatoes], they have a sort of irrigation scheme ... It seems to me that this takes up all the women's time, they cannot spare any to be in a club, or to be involved in a community project. They have to do what their husbands, or else what the first wife, tell them. So the few women [who are really] involved are the first wives or only wives. ...

From what I gathered, the women are 'taken' so as for the husband to have cheap labour. The profit from the garden goes to the husband, who uses it to get another wife, and so the circle goes on. Because the committee members were always busy in the garden, we arranged that I would meet not just with committee members, but with other women as well.

The next day I worked with the girls in the morning and spent half the afternoon waiting for the women. When they came I stressed that I was not being forced on them and that there were other areas keen to have my help. If they wanted me to stay they had to sacrifice. In the end we agreed. I meet the men as well, since they would never accept time 'wasted', as far as they were concerned, by women at a women's gathering.

After the weekend I spent the morning with the pre-school teachers, pointing out their mistakes and I especially stressed that they must always be alert for accidents. I pointed out to them that the children were their responsibility as soon as they were at school. The things they used to do – let the children go to the well or to the pit latrine without the teacher's presence.

Thandiwe had quite a few more problems with a snooty headmaster and other people and did not feel very welcome, but she stood her ground. Eventually her sound advice on the organization of the pre-school committees, and the running of the pre-schools themselves, was accepted, at least in part.

I brought Thandi home for lunch a few times, and both the girls and Rolf liked her immensely. She explained all about her training at St Gabriel's, and Caroline, especially, was very interested in this. Eventually, Ben came up from Bulawayo and visited us in the office. I had never given a thought to the race of Thandi's boyfriend but was now surprised that he turned out to be white. Ben Henson was his name. Mixed-race couples were very rare at the time, if only because there were so few opportunities for them to meet across the colour line. The Land Tenure Act worked effectively to keep the races apart. Ben was a Quaker and the couple had met at Hlekweni, in an atmosphere of equality.

Women in Chikwakwa and Chinyika TTLs had noticed the pre-schools that had sprung up in Chinamora and were thinking of starting such centres themselves. They invited me through their Women Adviser, Mrs Muguto, to give a talk on pre-schools. I took Thandi with me, introduced her and later sent her on a field trip to further advise interested groups. She met with women's groups at Chinyika Township, St John's Mission, Chikwaka Council Hall and St Francis School. On her return she wrote

very sound suggestions for minimum standards to be observed at rural pre-schools. She also left me with a script for a play introducing the idea of pre-school education as distinct from schooling.

To my chagrin, Thandiwe Mangwenzi left our Section in September 1975. She told me that she had gone to see Miss Wilson to tell her that she intended to get married and asked her what, in view of this, her projects in the Section would be. Apparently Wyn Wilson was in one of her moods. 'She threw my papers at me, told me "We are not a marriage agency here!", and that was the end of my job!' Thandiwe found employment as an instructress in the girls' home-making course at Hlekweni, where she also had the opportunity to teach women about pre-school education. Thandi and Ben married soon after and had a baby son in March 1977, whom they named Njabulo (Happiness).

I then lost track of them entirely but met Thandi again years later, quite by chance, in the centre of Salisbury. We spontaneously embraced with joy in the middle of the street. I learned that Ben – by now principal of Hlekweni – had been called up into the Rhodesian Army soon after Njabulo was born. Being a practising Quaker, he applied for exemption from military training and service as a conscientious objector. Exemption was refused.² To avoid conscription or jail for Ben, the young family left for Britain. Ben received a scholarship and completed a Masters Degree in Adult Education at Manchester University, while Thandi worked as a supply teacher in one of the town's poorer areas. They had another son in 1978, Mitchell Bongani (Be Thankful). After that brief encounter I lost contact with Thandiwe and Ben again for many years. When we met again in 2014, I learned that, after their sojourn in Britain and then Lesotho, Ben and Thandi had returned to Zimbabwe in 1981.

As predicted, Thandiwe did go far, both with her education and in her career. On her return she fulfilled her dream of becoming a social worker by graduating from the School of Social Work (affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe) in 1984, after a three-year course. Following this she held was a director of Glen Forest Training Centre on the outskirts of Harare. In 1991 she formed IMAGO, a consultancy offering services in the fields of research, training in business development and addressing gender and

² Two other practising Quakers applied for exemption from military training and service as conscientious objectors. Although there were provisions for conscientious objection in both the Defence Act and the National Services Act on the grounds of '*bona fide* religious beliefs', the Exemption Board refused all three applications. Apparently it interpreted their objection as being 'political rather than religious'. Stephen Hussey, then Agricultural Officer at Hlekweni, took his case right up to the High Court, which rejected the appeal. To avoid conscription or jail, possibly followed by another call-up, he also left the country with his young family. Richard Knottenbelt, a teacher of mathematics and science at Chikwingwizha Minor Seminary, married with two very young children, served a five-month sentence with labour in Khami Medium Security Prison.

human rights issues. As IMAGO's Managing Director she received the Business Women of the Year award. In 2004, after two years' full-time study at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, she graduated with a Masters Degree in Management, specializing in Development Economics.

In 2006 Thandiwe became a founder member of Zimbabwe's African Women's Initiative in Developing Economies (AWIDE), a non-profit organization focusing on improving the livelihoods of rural communities by imparting skills and knowledge to women and girls that enable them to enter value-added manufacturing processes. Skills taught include the processing and packaging of indigenous and locally grown fruit. As a result rural women and girls are processing indigenous melons, marula fruit and lemons into jams and marmalades, tomatoes and chilli into sauces and pastes, packaging them attractively and marketing them successfully. Today Thandiwe Henson is the Regional Co-ordinator for AWIDE.



Widowed Mrs Dinah Nyakabau of Uzumba TTL in Mrewa District was the first Women Adviser in Mashonaland East to move into a Protected Village (on 14 July 1975). I went to visit her as the people moved into Nyamara. I remember a vast stretch of open ground. Piles of salvaged building material, heaps of pitiful belongings, toddlers crawling between them. Some food stores in sacks and other containers. Adults with eyes glazed over appearing to move in slow motion. The broad smile as Mrs Nyakabau saw me walking towards her. The two of us hugging. A few men scratching the outline of where they would build the family's first hut on the dry earth. A few mothers without men to help them, starting to do the same. A few fires where girls started to cook. Pots balancing on three stones. An eerie silence.

I seldom brought food for myself on my trips unless I was to spend the night. By the time I had organized meals for the family, I could not be bothered. This time I had brought a thermos flask with tea and sugar and milk. Mrs Nyakabau was enormously grateful. 'Strong, sugary, milky tea. Tanganda, of course. The best tea I ever had,' she said. We laughed. Then we cried together. I was known in my family for my inability to cry. These tears we shed together were an incredible relief to both of us. All further words were superfluous. I cried some more on my drive home. This stupid bloody war.

It was obvious that the move of the population of her work area into a PV would disrupt Mrs Nyakabau's work and her personal life for months to come. She, like all the people in her PV, had to build a new home,

get used to changed living conditions, the proximity of neighbours, the distance to her fields, the changed circumstances of war.

Women Advisers had never been entitled to government housing, so Mrs Nyakabau had to abandon her home – in her case, a sturdy brick house with a well and a flourishing vegetable garden – and build herself the best she could afford in the PV. She needed time to mourn the loss of her home, which in all likelihood would be destroyed. She needed the resilience to rise above her own loss to support others in coping with theirs. She needed to get to know the people living in her PV thoroughly, to gain the trust of many she had not worked with before, to overcome the mistrust of those who suspected that any government worker was an informer. She needed to re-assess the needs of women in their changed situation, encourage them to re-form the interest groups that some may have belonged to before, enthuse former voluntary workers to start sharing their knowledge and skills again.

Getting to know the formal leadership structure – the traditional leaders and the newly formed village committees – was relatively easy. Informal leadership structures were likely to have shifted. She needed to know developing political convictions as best as one could, herself remaining neutral, sometimes walking a tightrope. She needed to be acceptable to the people and to get the Keep commander to understand her role. Her DC would be even more difficult to please than before.

Having got to know her own PV thoroughly, she would then have to reach out to other PVs in her former work area, where life had been similarly disrupted. She had to try to satisfy her PCDO's need for factual, informative monthly reports from which so much of the 'flavour' of her own changed life and the people's changed lives was excluded, partly by necessity and partly because the Women Advisers simply did not have the writing ability to evoke it. She needed moral support.



A Protected Village under construction

In contrast to the people in Uzumba, Maramba and Pfunge TTLs the people of Mangwende TTL were never moved into PVs. The Chirimutas' daughter Winifred Kaseke remembers:

During 1977 or 1978 our home was attacked one night by the *vakomana*. They were hiding in the orchard. At the time only my parents, my maternal grandmother, my sister Hazel and two grandsons were at home. Both my brothers and four of us daughters had already married and moved away.

My grandmother was hard of hearing and when the shooting started, she thought it was thunder. She was very afraid of lightning so she left her bed and crawled on all fours through the kitchen to the dining room, where she hid under the table. My father found her there and soothed her.

No one was hurt in the attack; the bullets ricocheted off the roof. However, when father reported the incident to the DC in the morning our family was given a house in Mrewa Ttown.

Our home was never touched again during the war, nor ever after, when we had all moved away. Only the bream were fished out!

Jean Chirimuta's husband, Samuel Chirimuta, was a long-standing employee of Internal Affairs. During the late 1970s he was senior clerk in the DC's office, responsible for the station's day-to-day administration and reporting directly to Dave Mirams. Debbie Enslin, who was Assistant District Commissioner at that time, remembers him as

a dignified, quiet man with a lovely sense of humour, who was an invaluable member of staff.

I do remember thinking that it was absurd that I should be promoted to ADC level because of my academic qualifications – a man like Samuel, though without these, was infinitely more valuable to the organization than I was. I did not know Jean Chirimuta well. Dave Mirams actively discouraged contact with the Women's Section and with Woman Advisers, so there was little or no interaction with them. I do, however, remember that Dave had a very high regard for Samuel Chirimuta and, I believe, a great affection for him.

After independence Samuel Chirimuta was appointed the first District Administrator, as DCs were to be called, in Harare province at Market Square. His wife continued as Women Adviser for another two years, but was stationed at Forbes Avenue, Harare, and worked in urban townships.



The 18–28 November 1975 refresher course was the first in which I had all the Women Advisers in my care together and none from other provinces. It was clear by now that the needs in the provinces varied. Partly this was due to the prevailing circumstances, partly to the different needs expressed by women, and partly to the different approaches of provincial officers. For example, none of the others had introduced the civic affairs training that I had.

Debbie Allan, Cadet Marandellas, expressed interest in the course so I promptly made her assistant course director and involved her in the training as well as in its administration; I truly welcomed her interest and assistance. We had very much the same approach to community development work, and it was a joy to me to be able to discuss professional matters with her. I profited from her district perspective and she had become a friend at a personal level.

We still had standard inputs into Women Advisers' refresher courses, such as nutrition, with a programme assembled by Louise Allaart, the Chief Dietician in the Ministry of Health. Miss Allaart, of Dutch origin herself, had sent samples of all traditional foods to a laboratory in Holland for analysis and had very detailed lists of the nutritional composition of each food – protein, starch, vitamins, minerals, etc. She knew at what age a child could absorb what component. Her lessons were always interesting and her recipes appropriate for the rural setting. She invited Women Advisers to bring the recipes for the meals they cooked at home, had them analysed, and gave them feedback as to their nutritional value.

I myself, however, put the focus of this course on the role of the Women Adviser, on report writing and on the importance of reading. Up to now there had not been a uniform system of report writing for Women Advisers, and far too little emphasis was put on this aspect during their initial training. They had simply been told to write their monthly reports 'the way the District Commissioner wants them written'.

I needed a clearer and more comprehensive idea of what work my field staff were doing in their areas, with what types of groups and with individual households. I needed to be able to follow their progress as the year unfolded, I needed comparative data between work areas. I still dreamed of doing action research, yet I had never established a baseline in every district as I had never found the time to administer the massive

interview checklist that I had completed in Marandellas District. I asked DCs at a conference whether they objected to my introducing a uniform format for the Women Advisers' monthly reports. They did not. Few of them actually read their reports (nor did their representatives) and they did not find them very useful. Thus I introduced a new system which was to be useful primarily to me.

Monthly reports now needed a 'top sheet' (rhoneo'd by my office) which functioned as an index and gave a quick overview. Each working day of the month had to be accounted for. On the top sheet I required only what they did with whom and a page reference to the main body of the report. In the main body of the report, the Women Advisers had to expand on the entry, and each entry had to answer these questions: Who did what? When? Where? With whom and how many? For what reason? With what results? For example:

1 August: I was invited by the ... group at ... to help them plan an interesting programme for the rest of the year. ... members were present. I made suggestions and they decided to include ... in their programme. They asked me to help them find teachers for these subjects: ... I agreed to do this and to come back in about ... weeks' time with the answers.

We practised this formula in a plenary session and then each Women Adviser had to rewrite her last monthly report according to the new system. Each report was then discussed with its author and at each unsatisfactory paragraph I would say:

Does this paragraph answer the questions: Who did what? Where? With whom and how many? For what reason? With what result? No it doesn't! Rewrite it! Be specific!

It was not enough for them to say, for example, 'The Chief and the Demonstrator participated in the planning.' Which chief? What role did the chief have in the planning? What Demonstrator? 'Be Specific' became my middle name! I was delighted when I first heard it whispered surreptitiously behind my back. The message was beginning to sink in.

I can't pretend that my Women Advisers relished these intense sessions on report writing. Grace Mangoma, daughter of Bertha Chibisa, remembered in 2014 how her mother used to sit at their table at home, sighing when she had to write the monthly report! Women Advisers did not like written work. They clearly recognized that my new system would need far more effort than they had hitherto put into their reports. They found all sorts of reasons why it should not be adopted: My DC does not want a long report; Miss Wilson said we must write it as the DC wants it. They felt I was too pernickety with my constant 'Be specific! *Chekesai!*'

They were horrified at the idea that they might have to write a draft report first. I don't think they believed us when Debbie and I said that we practically never wrote a report in one go before it went for typing. (The joys of word-processing had not yet arrived!) Realistically, writing a draft first would also raise the problem of the availability of paper. Women Advisers were issued with triplicate books with carbon paper to write their reports: Top copy to the DC, second copy to me, third to stay in the book. Additional paper for drafts would have had to be supplied.

I had tried to motivate my Women Advisers by saying that our Section might expand one day and a Senior Women Adviser's post might be created. I assured them that it would be the worker who writes a good report that would be promoted. I don't think they believed me. 'Surely the one that does the best fieldwork must be promoted,' they argued. They did not yet have the experience to know that additional skills are needed at each supervisory level.

Since the first refresher course we had done together, Dorianne and I had always invited respective Provincial Commissioners to meet the Women Advisers during their refresher course for a 'problem-solving session'. Lionel Leach, PC Mashonaland East, came to meet the Women Advisers during their course. They had carefully listed problems and questions to be presented to him, without my being present. On the pages that follow are my notes, written up after the meeting. They had a few other minor questions and problems for the PC to consider. The four who actually worked in Mashonaland West (Hartley and Gatooma districts) asked me to forward the list to the PC Mashonaland West, which, of course, I did.

Lionel Leach did not yet quite believe that a considerable proportion of rural women had started to think seriously about their property rights when their marriage ended either through death or divorce. I assured him that they also thought about property rights during their marriage. Some chiefs were well aware of new social problems that needed new solutions. They knew that some men in wage employment did not bother to 'reject' their wives formally and did not claim their right to their children, which would have carried commensurate obligations. They simply abandoned their families. In other cases, where the woman returned with her children to her own father's or brother's home, she was not particularly welcomed because this meant sharing meagre resources. Such 'divorcees' needed land to support their children, and some chiefs had therefore started to allocate land to divorced or abandoned women.

Regrettably it was never arranged for Women Advisers to meet the Council of Chiefs.

Women Advisers meet the PC Mashonaland East

WAs: We Women Advisers are not happy that the tour by the provincial team to district offices is taking place while we are on the refresher course. We are feeling neglected as members of the district teams.

PC: I regret that this was unavoidable. Please do not feel neglected. *[It actually could have been avoided. The programme was drawn up by the Provincial Agricultural Officer, Piet Jordaan, and I had notified him that the Women Advisers' refresher course had been booked at Domboshawa before the June deadline. The PC was somewhat taken aback when he realized that Women Advisers felt strongly about this.]*

WAs: Can chiefs be asked [by Internal Affairs] to revise the customs regarding the inheritance of widows, the inheritance of property, the position of divorced women as regards property, and the custody of children?

PC: *[Considerable time was spent discussing this issue. The PC, like so many DCs, thought that the status of women in customary society was quite satisfactory. When the Women Advisers told him that the custom of the inheritance of a widow by a male of the husband's clan (kugara nhaka) needed revising, he was surprised.]* The inheritance of widows provides women with security. Women can refuse to be inherited.

WAs: Some widows do not wish to be inherited. They may have different reasons for this. For example they may not wish to become the second or third wife of a man already married with children. Few women like polygamy. What they do want is to have custody of their children and to be able to provide for them. For this they need land and they need to have the right to inherit some of the property they have helped their husband to build up during their marriage.

Yes, they can refuse to be inherited. But this usually means that they lose their children and that they lose any right to the husband's land.

Even if she agrees to be inherited, this does not necessarily mean security for her and her children. Often they are not cared for adequately by the deceased's family and often the children then no longer go to school.

PC: Do your statements about not wanting to be inherited reflect the opinion of the majority of women or just of the 'emancipated women'? *[I smiled, for I knew he did not think much of 'women's lib'!]*

WAs: Of the majority of women.

PC: Of course, this *kugara nhaka* is closely tied up with *lobola*. Would you be prepared to marry without *lobola*? *[The Women Advisers had no answer to this. We all knew that they themselves would not have agreed to marry without lobola and that they would not wish their daughters to do so. It cemented the relationship between the two families and – importantly for women – the momba yeumai (the 'motherhood cow' that had to be paid to the mother of the bride) was often the first property a married woman was able to acquire in her own right. I knew that we would have to discuss this further, probably many times, because they needed to find their own solution to the vexed inter-*

connection between lobola and the status of women. Their arguments for improving women's status within marriage, and when a marriage was dissolved through death or divorce, would always be countered by men asking, 'Would you be prepared to let your daughter marry without lobola?' They did not give up, however.]

WAs: Wives having no rights to property is holding back progress in the Tribal Trust Lands. Why should a woman learn modern farming methods and work hard in her husband's fields to help him support the family, and build up property, when she knows that she will lose all that property in the case of a divorce or if her husband dies?

Many women have strong feelings about this. They point to Women Advisers and say, 'You are in Internal Affairs, you must do something about it!'

In my area women were very concerned about this. They invited the chief to discuss the matter. They did not like what he said, so they invited the district officer. They did not like what he said either.

Could the Provincial Commissioner bring up this problem with the chiefs and stress that the problem had been brought to him by women?

PC: The matter could be brought up in the Council of Chiefs. Would Women Advisers from this and from other provinces be prepared to bring it up themselves at a meeting with the Council of Chiefs?

WAs: Yes, we are keen to bring up the problem. Women Advisers from other provinces would come also.

PC: I will support you if you also come up with a solution to the *lobola* problem.

WAs: During the first tour of the provincial team, Women Advisers were promised flights when the Natural Resources Board plane is in the district. Flights have taken place, but Women Advisers were left out. [*The NRB sometimes took male community leaders on flights to show them problems of soil erosion.*]

PC: I will bring this up at the next District Commissioners' conference. [*Alas, he forgot.*]

WAs: Transport is a problem for Women Advisers. A lot of time and energy is wasted by cycling long distances. We ask to be allowed to use scooters and claim a mileage allowance.

PC: This is a policy matter. I will have to discuss it with Miss Wilson. [*Time was also spent comparing funds apparently available to various departments at district level. Women Advisers thought that DEVAG had the most, that the DC's office had money to support male-led community projects and for courses for chiefs and headmen (but not for their wives), and that the DC and the Women's Section had none to support women's projects or local courses for women. This was a pretty accurate assessment and, of course, clearly indicated where government priorities lay. The PC had no satisfactory answer for this. He encouraged the Women's Section to continue putting in bids at budget time.*]

WAs: Why is it that no women are being trained as Agricultural Demonstrators?

PC: This is a question for DEVAG to answer.



During the second part of the year the Mobile Training Unit of the BCDT had again conducted 'Council Awareness Sessions for Women' in the 'non-sensitive' districts. Again, the training was a great success. A total of 1,542 women flocked to the lessons, bringing the total for the year to 2,954; even a few men had started to attend. Women Advisers asked for a further round and now specified whether there should be a new group or whether follow-up lessons were needed. I was immensely pleased and hoped that in the coming year I could build on the knowledge that the women had acquired and devise strategies to narrow the communication gap between councils and women residents. I knew, however, that I would need the support of district staff for this. Would I ever get it?



Looking back on my work towards the end of 1975, I had to admit to myself that not all aspects filled me with pride. It was clear that 'my' Women Adviser in Seki Township, though experienced in a rural area, had not been very effective in the urban setting. There were various reasons for this, not the least of which was insufficient support from myself. I resolved to remedy the situation by the following means:

- Familiarization with the development plans for Seki Township formulated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs – by head office, by the DC Goromonzi, by the Township Manager.
- Liaison with the community development section of the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, which had experience with community development work in urban areas.
- Formulation of a policy for community development work with women in Seki Township.
- Programme planning with the Township Worker.

As already mentioned, Seki township was administered by Internal Affairs because it was situated in a TTL. Townships in European Land were administered by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing, which also had a community development section and was fostering Township Management Boards. It also employed a few women officers, who focused mainly on women's concerns, helping them to articulate their felt needs and to act on them. One such Community Development Officer (Female)¹ was Beverley Kirby. It seemed obvious to me that I

¹ That was her actual job title!

should liaise with her as she had the urban experience that I lacked. I also already had a vision that at some stage we could explore the phenomenon of women who spent the rainy season in a TTL, farming their husband's land, and spent the dry season, when the fields lay fallow, in town with their husbands, who were in urban wage employment.

Bev and I loved discussing the issues arising in townships and she was more than willing to share her knowledge and experience with me. However, her boss felt otherwise. There had always been some rivalry between the two ministries but her boss held a personal grudge against Internal Affairs. Possibly because of this grudge, he resorted to the ruse of 'formal channels' to make our co-operation almost impossible. He instructed Bev that she could meet me only if my boss had written a formal letter to him requesting that she meet me. A date and time had to be requested and an agenda for our discussion had to be submitted.

We resorted to a counter ruse. We had lunch together or met after work for coffee, discussing work. Nobody could dictate whom we saw or what we discussed outside working hours. However, in time this got tedious, as we both had families. I eventually brought this position to my PC's attention. He talked to his Deputy Secretary, who talked to the Deputy Secretary in Local Government, who told his subordinate (Bev's boss) in writing to instruct his subordinate to give her counterpart in Internal Affairs every support. From then on we could meet as and when we thought fit.

At the time, Bev Kirby was already suffering from severe colitis, but she bore this condition with iron willpower, without talking about it and just making sure that she was always within easy reach of a toilet every working day. She was very committed to her work, had a tidy mind and amazing insight, which she shared generously with me. The fieldworkers in Local Government had higher educational qualifications than ours in Internal Affairs as they were working in a more complex and more sophisticated environment.

Alas, not much came of my good intentions and plans, as, already overstretched, I had to give more and more attention to the workers in the war areas. Thus Bev and I could not work as closely together as we had wished, though we periodically discussed what our Women Adviser could achieve most effectively in the township. Mrs Guzha remained neglected, but struggled bravely on.

Bev and I kept up intermittent social contact over time. Years later she had a reprieve as far as her health was concerned: her colitis seemed to be miraculously cured. She had three months of 'freedom', but was then diagnosed with liver cancer and died a few months later.



By the end of 1975, my span of control had risen from the original fourteen to twenty-seven. I now had to support and supervise eighteen Women Advisers, eight Development Workers and one Township Worker.

War had brought additional emotional and physical strain. I had spent 58 days in the field and 50 days actually training – not counting the preparations that running courses entailed, or the follow-up activities and report-writing. Trying to cope with an ever-increasing workload, I had put in a considerable number of hours in overtime every month of the year.

I had kept time-and-motion records for January, April, July and December. I had asked for an inspection by the work-study section of the Public Services Board (PSB), which was done. The subsequent report recommended either a professional assistant, who would also do much of the administrative work, or at least an administrative assistant. However, the report was mysteriously lost in our ministry, and a second inspection took place a few months later.

The PSB inspectorate's report pointed out that, if an additional supportive post was created, one would have to be created for all provinces, in accordance with standard government policy: all provinces had to be treated the same. It overlooked the fact that this had not been done for the post of Provincial Community Development Officer (Women). Posts had been introduced gradually in selected provinces as occasioned by the need to supervise increasing numbers of Women Advisers, and when the two Mashonaland provinces had been split into three, the third PCDOW's post had been forgotten. It also seemed to overlook the fact that posts could be created for all provinces for the sake of symmetry but then 'frozen' if they were not yet needed, thus saving the expenditure.

The inspector had asked: 'Why is it that so much more work is being generated in Mashonaland East and Hartley/Gatooma districts than in other provinces?' Apparently this was most inconvenient for the bureaucrats. Actually, I did not know myself. I did not even know how many staff my fellow officers had, or how many requests came from the field as I had never seen any of their reports.

I phoned all my colleagues to ask whether they would welcome an assistant's post. With the exception of Dorienne Graham-Jolly, none of the other provincial officers wanted an assistant or even seemed to have need of one. Adaire Robbins (Midlands) said, 'For heaven's sake, I don't need one; she would only be underfoot!' However, my colleagues had no objection to my being given one. Dorienne thought that the greatest help would be in the creation of an additional provincial officer's post

for Mashonaland, so that each of us would have to deal with only one province, and with fewer districts.

However, both my Provincial Commissioners were supportive. It took me months to write my annual report for 1975. When Keith Bloore, PC Mashonaland West, eventually got to read it (in June 1976) he wrote to Lionel Leach, PC Mashonaland East:

Thank you for the sight of the attached. It is an excellent, profound report and Mrs C-R should be congratulated. This officer seems to be overworked, to put it mildly.

I would like to discuss the situation and related matters with you when you have a little time ...

I was still in Miss Wilson's good books, but she merely gave me a lecture on 'not overdoing things'.

At the end of 1974, I had attached to my monthly report summaries of how my days had been allocated to the several aspects of my role. During the last quarter of 1975, I had provided a detailed task analysis to the PSB inspectorate and to my seniors. In my annual report for 1975, I listed the monthly, course and special reports that I had not written, owing to lack of time. I had calculated that to do my role justice, I needed 260 working days instead of the 214 available!

Analysing the time-and-motion records and those aspects of my role that I had had to neglect or even omit, it seemed clear to me that I actually needed a professional assistant who could also take on some training and liaison duties, and perhaps support the Township Worker as a field project. But since such a post was very unlikely to be created at provincial level, I argued that I needed an administrative assistant to relieve me of the burden of administration work, which I had found tedious even before I was overworked, and which I now had to attend to so often after hours.

Planning ahead, I tried to allocate my days more rationally. I listed the aspects of my role: Support/Supervision of Field Staff; Training; Preparation and Evaluation of Training; Liaison/Integrating Programmes with other agencies; Policy Making; Assignments by the Ministry; Reporting; Administration. Under each heading, I listed the major tasks to be carried out, also allocating a specific number of days to them. I planned and re-planned my work. I set priorities. I listed the requests from the field, from the PC and from other development agencies that I could not fulfil. I showed that reporting responsibilities alone took up 38 days: annual reports, monthly reports, course reports, reports of follow-up training, special reports, and reading the field staff's reports; 260 working days were needed, there was no doubt.

However, reading these records and other papers now, I realize that I was a driven woman. Driven at first by sheer interest; driven by the need 'to prove myself' in the world of employment after years of housewifery; driven by ambition – but not for promotion: there would not be a chance until Miss Wilson died, anyway, and I did not even want her job at the time. I preferred the fieldwork and training to her policy-making and administrative role. Rather, I was driven by the ambition to attain the standards I had set myself, which were unrealistic in the circumstances, driven by self-imposed striving for 'professionalism'.

Later I was also driven by the senselessness, the cruelty of the war, which dehumanized soldiers fighting on both sides as well as some of the civilian population, who denounced others as witches or sell-outs and used the opportunity to settle personal scores by having them killed, often in a brutal manner. In the end, driven by the ethical imperative to support the women workers in the field who had striven so hard in the most difficult circumstances of the war, often at the risk of their lives, 'so that there would be something good', and driven by the wish to make a contribution to the 'peace effort', not to the 'war effort'.

I did not realize at the time that Wyn Wilson thought I was becoming 'too wilful' and that my independent quest for an assistant irked her severely. Again, looking back, I must say that I might have been more tactful and should have tried to obtain her consent for my independent quest. I was quite blind to her sensitivity at the time.

Following 'normal channels' had brought no results. Lionel Leach had written to the Secretary for Internal Affairs supporting my request. Wyn Wilson, too, came to acknowledge that I was overworked and relented to some extent. During December 1975 and January 1976 she arranged for a vacation placement – a university student who had completed the first two years of her Bachelor of Administration degree. Miss Wilson asked whether Dorienne and I would like to share her, but Dee decided she did not want the extra burden of instructing and supervising a temporary assistant. Thus she was stationed with me.

Cleret Gumbochena did much useful work in the office during her placement. To make her stay more interesting, I took her on a few field trips, though not into operational areas. On some of these I took photographs for the 1976 'Challenge and Achievement' celebrations. I took Cleret to a Goromonzi Women Advisers' seminar, where we worked on programme plans. She accompanied me on a trip with a journalist from the Ministry of Information who took photographs of women's projects and did some filming.

Cleret enjoyed these trips greatly, was very interested in our work and

said that she would take some new ideas to her own rural home in Chibi TTL, ideas that could help improve life there. In the office she carried out the filing, expanded the system to accommodate new categories that were needed, and she re-wrote the index. I asked her to transcribe tapes on which I had recorded various interviews and speeches and to translate Shona texts into English and vice versa. She assembled the course requirements for the forthcoming HEDs course. She administered the Women Advisers' library and she selected and bought additional books.

The report she wrote at the end of her stay is engaging, providing useful insight into how a young woman who had never worked in an office before saw things. For example, she had never encountered a filing system before, and her written comments on the usefulness of such a scheme are very entertaining. Cleret had also analysed my time-and-motion records. She commented in her end-of-stay report:

One cannot dispute that Mrs Chenaux-Repond is a very busy woman. She works in the office, in the field, and also at home. Her work is so much that she has to work overtime to keep up. She keeps a record of all she does at three-monthly intervals. This is called a time-and-motion record.

I worked out how much overtime she works per month, starting from September 1974 to December 1975. It is usually just over 50 hours per month. Once it was even more than 60 hours.

I also calculated the time she spends travelling, working in the field, at home, phone calls, reporting, attending meetings, etc. I got quite dizzy analysing all this.



On 15 December 1975, Cadet Debbie E. Allan submitted suggestions to her DC (Brian H. Lucas) on the 'Orientation of Administrative Staff Responsible for Community Development (Women): Marandellas'. She stated:

The attached paper has been prepared with two things in mind:

- 1) The Women Advisers, who are the key workers in this section, and with whom the member of staff would be working closely, are, or should be, Community Development Workers, involved with every aspect of development in the Tribal Trust Lands. They are not, as they are commonly believed to be, Women's Club Organizers. They do work closely with these homecraft groups; however, this should not be their sole occupation.

- 2) If the Women Advisers are to realize their full potential in the development of the Tribal Trust Lands, they need effective support and supervision from the district's administrative staff.

In order for the member of staff assigned to this section to fulfil his/her duties effectively and in accordance with national, provincial and district objectives and policy, it is essential that he/she is given every encouragement, opportunity and assistance to become fully informed on all aspects of this section of the Ministry.

She then presented an eight-page document giving:

- General background information that should be acquired by the member of the administrative staff to whom the responsibility for the Women's Section had been assigned.
- Background information particular to Marandellas District, including a résumé of the aspects of development in which the Section was presently involved, which would require the attention of the administrative staff assigned to the Section.
- The role of the member of staff assigned to the Section.
- The work programme of the member of staff assigned to the Section.

Debbie Allan also made suggestions about additional areas in Marandellas District that Women Advisers could become involved in or should be briefed on, with which I fully agreed. She mentioned adult literacy and closing the communication gap between women and councils, in particular. The DC endorsed Cadet Allan's suggestions and forwarded them to the PC (5 January 1976), adding further points, including his recommendation that the Section should be absorbed into the Administration, a position with which I did not necessarily agree. He stated that, if this were done, we would have decent promotion prospects!



Despite my great interest in adult literacy, and the many requests for literacy classes that I had received from women, I had not been able to achieve much in this respect. I had not made a concerted effort to lobby councils to sponsor the excellent programmes that ALOR offered; and I had not equipped Women Advisers sufficiently to undertake this lobbying. To establish such programmes required proper, consolidated planning and much more intensive training of Women Advisers than I had hitherto undertaken – and more concerted support from the district office.

However, I resolved to lobby Miss Wilson for the stationing of Development Workers trained as literacy teachers in some of the PVs. In this way, their pay would be guaranteed and they would have my support and supervision. There would be no need to equip others to set up and administer a sophisticated programme. Granted, these projects would not be holistic like the functional literacy programmes run by ALOR in Dendera and Wedza, but we could give some women and girls in PVs the chance to improve their lives and give them a positive orientation towards the future.

I had also made a start in Chiota TTL to help the community – as distinct from the council – to initiate and administer a literacy programme. I started in Chiota because I could count on Debbie Allan's support. Debbie referred to this in the above-mentioned document:

For a number of years people in Chiota TTL have shown an interest in the establishment of adult literacy classes. A number of attempts have been made with varying success.

Since July 1975 a number of meetings, initiated by Women Adviser L. Nhavira, have been held by interested members in the community, which have resulted in the formation of a Working Committee, which has now acquired the status of a Community Board. This board is endeavouring to raise funds in order to sponsor someone to be trained by the Adult Literacy Organization of Rhodesia.

The project needs careful planning if it is to succeed. According to ALOR it is a pilot project and careful documentation of its progress would be of great value to other communities who may wish to undertake something similar. The member of staff assigned to this section will need to assist in the liaison between the board and the chiefs, the PCDOW, ALOR, the local African Councils and possibly the regional authority.

We got quite far in Chiota TTL. The women held numerous meetings. They had worked out how much each literacy student would have to pay for each lesson (over and above paying for their books and writing implements) and that this would have to be paid in advance for a term in order to guarantee a modest salary for the teacher. They discussed this thoroughly with would-be students. They wrote a constitution for the project in their own words, which I checked over several visits, and I was satisfied that, though written in their own words, it covered all the aspects that a constitution should. They found volunteers to administer the project and project funds. However, the project crashed before it could be implemented.

I was mortified when, on one of my visits, I found a glum group of women being addressed by a man in a suit, who humiliated them by ridiculing the constitution of their literacy project that had been written in a school exercise book, waving it around in his left hand and jabbing at it with his right forefinger. His pronouncements that self-help was exploitation and that government should be paying for all this killed the project.



As the war accelerated and Internal Affairs became a paramilitary wing of the government, the role of the District Commissioner changed. His judicial role diminished. A former DC told me that people brought fewer and fewer cases to his court. His role as President of Councils diminished as more and more councils curtailed their development role or collapsed altogether. His civil-defence role increased, both in commercial farming areas and in the Tribal Trust Lands.



The guerrillas generally killed two types of people among the rural population – sell-outs and witches. Sell-outs were those who gave, or were suspected to have given, information about the guerrillas' whereabouts or hidden weapons to the Rhodesian security forces or to the district administration. Large sums of money were offered for them to do so. Both sides of the conflict had a network of informers. However, there is little doubt that many innocent people were accused, or wrongly suspected, of being sell-outs. Being employed by government – even as a teacher, Agricultural Demonstrator, or Women Adviser – could be enough 'proof'. Often government workers were warned to resign 'or else'.

Many a hateful person settled personal scores by denouncing as sell-outs or witches whoever had wronged them, or was in their way, or had aroused their envy. Both sell-outs and witches were usually paraded in front of the assembled villagers at night and subjected to a public trial. If found guilty, they were savagely beaten and killed, often very cruelly, and usually in the presence of the villagers, including children. Often their relatives were not allowed to bury them. Sometimes there were accusers among the spectators. However, almost everybody kept quiet for fear of being accused of sympathizing with a sell-out or a witch.

The security forces committed atrocities, too. I am not talking about 'killing the enemy in battle'. While guerrilla atrocities were widely publicized by the government, its propaganda aimed at making whites believe that the

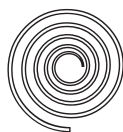
security forces killed only terrorists, apart from a few civilians 'caught in crossfire', or curfew-breakers. Most whites believed this. Yet, being 'caught in crossfire' could mean that the army attacked a village, suspecting that guerrillas were hiding there, and fired indiscriminately at anyone present. The euphemism 'follow-up operations' could mean that the army arrived at a village, beat up men, women and children, and took others away for interrogation and torture, and even execution, in an attempt to find out where guerrillas had gone. 'Skull bashing', as some called it, was possibly most frequent after a contact in which members of the army had seen their friends killed or seriously injured.

Women in the operational areas sometimes told me of specific incidents of killing, torture and rape.



1976





The period between January and March 1976 illustrates the diversity of my job very well. I made supportive/supervisory visits to Women Advisers, Development Workers and the Township Worker, and held seminars with Women Advisers at district offices. I consulted with DCs about our co-operation and possible conflicting expectations between district and province. I briefed Keep commanders on the role of our staff and the aims and mode of operation of our section.

Some field staff visited me in my office. I held selection interviews for a Women Adviser's post in Soswe TTL. I briefly assisted training officers Betty Mtero and Penny Ross with the initial training of Women Advisers and Development Workers and made follow-up visits to trainee Women Advisers on field placements. I prepared the HEDs initial course to be held in April, held briefing meetings with trainers, and purchased the materials for the course. I conducted selection interviews for applicants for the course and its resultant (unpaid) leadership positions. An applicant for the PCDOW's post (Miss L. Stone, who was, however, never appointed) was stationed with me for induction training.

I liaised with ALOR, WGL, FAWC, and the Red Cross about the integration of their programmes, and asked the BCDT for Local Government Awareness training in the 'non-sensitive' districts. I participated in various staff meetings at national, provincial and district level, and carried out special assignments for the ministry, collecting material and accompanying a photographer from the Ministry of Information to take pictures for the forthcoming 'Challenge and Achievement' celebrations.

I attended to my reporting duties, writing reports on field placements and selection interviews and on the Women Advisers' refresher course held in November. I wrote my monthly reports and continued writing my annual report for 1975. I dealt with staff and administrative matters such as conditions of service for Development Workers, which were being unequally applied in districts, and with monthly pay or sensitive-area allowances that were not being received. Two Development Workers resigned, a new Literacy Teacher was stationed, and a Development Worker was transferred. Mrs Moyosvi, a Women Adviser in Mudzi, resigned to go on 'maternity leave'.

During March alone I travelled 3,554km in my own car, at least half of it on poor roads. I was flown into operational areas. I continued to

put in an average of fifty hours' self-imposed overtime per month, though I continued my battle for an assistant. The challenges were manifold and differed markedly between 'sensitive' and 'non-sensitive' districts.



The *chimurenga* was spreading steadily in the east and south-east of the country along the border with Mozambique and was by now adversely affecting the work of my colleagues in the Manicaland and Victoria provinces. Until now, Operation Hurricane had been the only declared 'operational area', but in February 1976 Operation Trasher, headquartered in Umtali, was instituted by the military, and was followed in May by Operation Repulse with its headquarters in Fort Victoria. Protected Villages were introduced in Manicaland.

However, focusing on the positive, Wyn Wilson prepared to celebrate ten years of 'Challenge and Achievement' by the Women's Section, and an event would take place later in the year. We needed photographs and some publicity leading up to the occasion, so the Ministry of Information was enlisted to take photographs and to produce a film on the achievements of rural women. I took staff with me on field trips for this purpose but also took some photographs myself. The *Rhodesia Herald* was willing to assist with advance publicity and its reporter, Gary Dixon, interviewed me. A photograph was taken of me and Women Advisers Nhavira and Shekede in my office, and an article entitled 'Flying Teacher Maia Brings Progress to the TTLs' was published. I found the article rather silly, even more so as the rationale for the term 'flying teacher' had been edited out when the text needed shortening.

I can't remember when I had started flying to the PVs. It became too dangerous to travel there by road in my own car on account of landmines and potential ambushes. Internal Affairs had a small air wing, part of the ADF structure, and staffed by several competent pilots. They flew Cessna aircraft for casevac, reconnaissance and re-supply purposes.¹ The parlance in our section was 'I am going on the pay-run'.

The Cessnas were flown in civilian colours at first but were later painted a dull green, as the threat from anti-aircraft missiles became serious. I remember them always flying very low to avoid enemy fire. Later, landmines were sometimes planted on the runways, and Internal Affairs staff carried out 'sweeps' before a plane was due to land. Indeed, at least one aircraft was destroyed by a landmine planted on a runway.

¹ See 'Intaf Air Wing', *Rhodesia - Intaf* <<http://www.freewebs.com/dudleywall/intafairwing.htm>>.

Ken Brown, the Senior Operations Manager, often flew Dorianne, and sometimes Penny Ross, into Mashonaland Central and delighted in giving them both flying lessons. Dee especially was very excited about this. I flew mainly with Russell Kilner – a highly capable pilot, originally trained by the Rhodesian Air Force – who had the reputation of being somewhat of a ‘cowboy’, as he dared to fly from, and to land on, soggy runways during inclement weather when others would not have dared to do so. He had three young daughters and I was told that he made wonderful toys for them, which included a doll’s house with very intricate furnishings. Sometimes I flew with Laurie Graham, who later went on to fly for Air Zimbabwe and international airlines. The pilots were usually armed and trained in handling weapons. I remember the pistol on Laurie’s belt.

I always felt safe flying into the PVs: we were usually collected from, and brought back to, the nearby airstrip by the armoured vehicle that carried out the mine-sweep and I never experienced an incident. But Russell was later shot at from the ground while flying over Mrewa District and wounded in the stomach. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (MSM) (Civil Division). His citation read:

Mr Kilner is employed as a pilot for the African Development Fund. During the last two years Mr Kilner has flown over 2000 hours in operational areas. He had to make an emergency landing after being hit by ground fire.

The Internal Affairs pilots were always outstandingly helpful to us women community development officers, truly appreciating that we were ‘still going out’, doing what they saw as valuable work. Some also thought we were slightly mad!



I made a supportive visit to Women Adviser M’pakaviri in Mondoro North (Hartley), partly to take photos of women’s projects and partly to hold discussions with women who had assembled for their women’s club area general meeting. We discussed progress made with their projects and the role of HEDs and the clubs’ responsibilities towards them. As was usual on such occasions, I was welcomed to the meeting with several songs and escorted back to my car by singing and dancing club members.

Women’s club members in this area endeavoured to make Mondoro North council hall usable as a training centre. On this occasion they showed me the money they had collected to buy kitchen equipment. We counted the coins together and drew up a preliminary list of what they thought was required so that they could do a costing exercise. Other

opportunities for contact and discussion with Women Advisers arose when I conducted selection interviews for the HEDs' course in Seki, Ngezi, Mrewa, Chikondomo, Goromonzi and Mondoro.

In Ngezi TTL (Gatooma) I met both a 'society' and a 'savings club'. Societies (the English term was always used) were popular in all districts. Their aim was to improve the homes of its members. Each contributed an agreed amount of cash monthly. With this combined amount saved up, designated members bought agreed items, which were handed over to the hostess of the month.² Once all members had received said items a new set of home improvement articles was agreed upon. Usually society members did not wear uniforms, but in this society they did – a uniform designed by its members.



I remember a field visit to Seki TTL in particular. Rachel Chivanga was one of our older Women Advisers. Appointed in January 1969, she was also one of the more experienced ones that I worked with. Lucy Mukombiwa described her in 2013:

Rachel Chivanga, who was so much older, was very kind to me. She guided me when I started work and gave me good advice. I was still lacking confidence when I first started. At first I was assigned to Chinamora and Chikwakwa TTLs, Mrs Chivanga to Seki TTL. In Chikwakwa the male Community Advisers had made it known that they did not want any Women Adviser 'interfering', especially not such a young one. So I was shy to start with and did not want to go there. But Rachel Chivanga told me I had to face up to them and she supported me by coming to my first meetings in Chikwakwa. She advised me on what to say and stood next to me at the meetings. In this way she made sure that the CAs could not intimidate me.

Mrs Chivanga had repeated her long-standing concern for destitute old widows in Seki TTL once more. It was time to respond. It has always been held that Shona culture takes care of its old people. In rural areas married sons usually lived in the kraal of their parents and, as they grew old, supplied their daily needs. Daughters-in-law cooked for them and nursed them when this became necessary. Children in urban employment, particularly sons, sent home groceries, soap and money to help support their parents. Mrs Chivanga claimed that there were a number of destitute

² Note that these articles were regarded as the woman's property and were treated as part of her estate.

1976



A society in Ngezi: Women Adviser Mrs Mapininga holds a *huku* (chicken), which was to be a present for me, and the items in the basin are for the 'hostess of the month'



The office-bearers of a savings club in Ngezi with their set of books

widows living in pitiful circumstances on the fringes of Seki villages. I found her descriptions of their living conditions hard to believe, but I agreed on a tour to assess their situation.

She had told me that she had tried on many occasions to get the councillor, the council chairman or the chief to come and see for themselves, but they never did, so I knew that an incentive was needed to get them to accompany us. I solicited fourteen bags of firewood from Lakas Products for the old people. I wrote to the council chairman and the secretary asking them if the council's pick-up truck would collect the donation and if they and/or the councillor would help us to distribute the wood. It worked. Thus the Women Adviser, myself, the Seki area chairwoman, the chairwoman of Goromonzi District women's club, and the two HEDs assembled. We had also invited the chief, but he claimed to have other commitments. The local councillor accompanied us and made a pick-up available to transport our group and our firewood.

What we found shocked me deeply: A dilapidated hut with a leaking roof at the edge of a kraal. A stench. A few items and soiled clothing lying scattered on the floor. The aftermath of a fire that had not been lit for some time. A very old woman lying on a broken reed mat, wrapped in dirty blankets (rural people don't use sheets). When I bent over to greet her, it took all my willpower not to reel back. The woman was practically incontinent. She could not walk well and at night could not get outside to relieve herself, so her blankets were soaked and eventually dried out again: she did not have the strength to fetch water and wash them.

I asked the assembled village women to help clean up the place. They were reluctant to do so, so I started by helping the grandmother to get up and I seated her near a bush outside. Then I threw the blankets out of the door and started to sweep the hut. Everyone now went into action. Women brought water. One blanket was washed at a nearby home, and there was a promise to take the others to the river. The few pitiful clothes were bundled up to be washed. I had brought a few secondhand clothes (just in case) and gave them to the old woman. Water was put on a fire outside.

When the inside of the hut had been cleaned up, the Women Adviser and HED took her inside, helped her to wash herself and dressed her in clean clothes. She now perked up and hobbled out again to sit among us and tell the Women Adviser what details she knew of her children's whereabouts. A village woman brought hot food to eat and water to drink. We gathered that the old woman sometimes ventured out in the evenings and was given scraps of food left over from family meals. If she didn't, she picked up pieces of cold sadza that had been thrown to the chickens.

I felt that it was time for me to give a pep talk to the village women and the representatives of women's clubs: What has happened to the African tradition of respecting old people and of children supporting their aged parents? Where is your compassion for neglected old people? Where is your initiative in finding errant children – sons, daughters, nephews, nieces? I decreed that the matter was to be brought to the headmen's and to the chief's attention. The area and district women's club chairwomen were to bring up this problem at their club meetings. The councillor was to bring it to the next council meeting to see if funds could be allocated to the most destitute. The kraal at the edge of which the old woman had at least found shelter was to draw up a roster of women to do the cleaning, washing and to give her food. Everybody had to help to find the offspring, reporting details of what they found out to the chief and to the Women Adviser.

I subsequently made detailed notes about every old person we visited. With the help of shamed villagers, councillors and women's club leaders, we were later able to locate some of the errant sons, grandsons or other relatives who had moved to urban areas and to cajole them into taking responsibility for their aged family member. Although most of the young relatives lived in town, we also found an Agricultural Demonstrator who came to collect his old mother and brought her 'home' to where he was stationed, for his wife to look after her.



Women Adviser Guzha, who had been stationed in Seki Township for almost a year now, came to my office to discuss her work. I taught her the programme-planning format that I had introduced to others and she worked on formulating three plans based on problems and needs that township women had brought to her attention. We decided that she would meet me in my office once a month to discuss progress. Her motivation and output increased sharply over the coming months and she made good progress towards achieving the objectives in the plans, which, she said, had given her a sense of direction.

Her motivation was further improved when I managed to arrange a meeting in the Seki Township Manager's office with the ALOR literacy instructor. We all discussed how the two fieldworkers could co-operate and support each other's work. As students progressed towards literacy, the teacher would invite the Women Adviser to speak on various topics to impart additional knowledge and to encourage students to get involved in other activities.



In Mudzi District, Women Advisers Lydia Psuura and Bertha Chibisa had huge work areas with large populations. Buses were no longer running, and travelling on bicycles through war areas had become exceedingly dangerous. The communities in which the people they worked with lived – indeed, people’s very social interactions – had changed drastically. Their job descriptions clearly needed to be adapted to the new situation. In consultation with them and their DC and ADC, and with the help of a detailed map, I divided their work areas into a ‘home area’, where their efforts were to be concentrated, and the ‘wider area’.

Mrs Psuura lived near Masenda School, in headman Makoto’s area, under the jurisdiction of Chief Nyamukoho. Within a radius of six kilometres from the school were fourteen kraals, and the nearest clinic was twelve kilometres from Mrs Psuura’s home at Nyamukoho. This area now became her ‘home area’.

Mrs Chibisa lived near Katsande Township, in Chief Nyakuchena’s area. A radius of seven and a half kilometres was determined to encircle her home area, within which lay ten kraals. The clinic nearest to her home was six kilometres away at Makosa. The ‘home’ and ‘wider’ areas of the Mtoko Women Advisers were similarly circumscribed.

The Women Advisers were instructed to work as follows:

- Commit half of your working day to the home area, half to the wider area.
- Make your home area the ‘model area’. The success of your year’s work will be assessed on the achievements in the model area.

In the model area, do a survey:

- Determine the number of families (husband/wife/children) in each kraal.
- List what each kraal has or does not have (e.g. latrines, rubbish pits, ovens, vegetable gardens, etc.).
- List the needs that women express in each kraal.
- List the needs that you, as Women Adviser, see in each kraal.
- List the resource persons available in the area.
- Make a programme plan for the area.
- Discuss the programme plan with the PCDOW.

In the wider area:

- Visit Development Workers once a month, spending two nights.
- Attend Mudzi extension staff meetings.
- Ask for the programme at the district training centre.

- Ask to give lessons at each course, together with fellow Women Advisers.
- Plan courses at the district training centre.

I found that giving these Women Advisers specific tasks to undertake helped them overcome an increasing sense of isolation and powerlessness. When the Women Advisers and their neighbours had to move into PVs later in the year, their 'home area' became the PV that they moved into.

I also felt that the twelve voluntary workers who had been active in Mudzi and Mtoko districts during 1975 and were still doing voluntary work needed recognition and encouragement: the 'situation' was difficult for them, too. I acknowledged their work in the form of a gift of a pair of dressmaking scissors and a measuring tape, a commercial sewing pattern for a man's shirt, and two metres of fabric. The scissors and tape were for themselves. Each would make a shirt for her husband as a gesture of thanks for his moral support.



I introduced a systematic way of programme planning to Women Advisers at seminars, mostly during the early months of 1976. I had three motives for doing this: I was still keen to 'professionalize' the Women's Section, or at least my work in Mashonaland; I wanted to develop the Women Advisers' skills; and, being so chronically short of time, I wanted to confine my field visits to support steps in their action plans where my input was clearly needed and/or would have the greatest impact. I was still hoping to do some action research ...

I conducted a seminar for Women Advisers S. Sakuringwa, C. Goto and M. Chitumba of Wedza District at Makarara, Zviyambe Council, on 3 and 4 March 1976. I see that the programme started at 08.00hrs on the first day and ended at 17.00hrs the next, so I probably travelled there and back after hours. The war had not yet overtly reached Wedza District, so I could still travel in my own R6.

I always started a seminar by disseminating information. This time it was the roster of Women Advisers who would explain the exhibits at the forthcoming ten-year 'Challenge and Achievement' celebrations, the farewell for the retiring Secretary for Internal Affairs, R.J. Powell, and his wife, the cup he would present to the Section (though today I have no recollection about the criteria by which it was to be awarded to staff, or, indeed, whether it ever was), and forthcoming courses. Then each Women Adviser would list the needs and problems expressed by women in her work area and make a second list of the needs and problems that she saw

that had not necessarily been expressed by the women. The lists of one of them were posted on the wall on a flip chart, and we started work on 'defining the problem'.

I had devised a simple format for programme planning:

A The current undesirable situation The Problem (the need expressed)			B The future desired situation The Problem Solved (the need met)	
Method: (How to get from A to B)			→ → → → → → → → →	
Step	When? (date)	Who? (does)	What? How?	(remarks)
1				
2				
3				
etc.				

It wasn't that simple for the Women Advisers, actually. 'Defining the problem' isn't always straightforward. To give a simple example: women might say 'our children are always sick' and 'the clinic is too far away' and complain that the council refuses to build one nearer to them. The Women Adviser would then have to find out whether there was a problem of malnutrition (usually protein deficiency) and, if so, whether that was caused by poverty, by lack of knowledge, or by husbands not giving their wives a groundnut field, for example. However, the 'sickness' might not be the result of malnutrition but be caused by contaminated water, and, if so, by not boiling it. Food might become contaminated by flies (there not being any toilets), or water might become contaminated by latrines too near wells, and so on. In these cases, the 'problem' could certainly not be solved by someone financing a clinic nearer by. The children might not even be 'always sick', and this might just be used as a reason for wanting a clinic closer simply for convenience.

Very different action plans would be needed to deal with the different causes of the problems – the needs expressed by women – so these needs had to be thoroughly analysed. This was done, first, on the basis of observation and discussion in the field, and then, when the programme plan was being drawn up, by means of 'problem trees' to arrive at a clearly defined 'undesirable current situation'. Listing the action steps was simpler, though defining the 'who', 'what', 'when' and 'how' could present difficulties for the Women Advisers – especially when aspects of the 'what' or 'how' had to be quantified.

We worked through one example together all morning. In the afternoon, each Women Adviser had to try to draw up a plan by herself, while I took time to discuss the latest monthly report with each of them individually. I checked through their plans at night – after we had cooked the evening meal together and spent a few sociable hours chatting under the stars. There was much laughter as we relaxed. How different this evening, and its conversation, was from the evenings I spent in the PVs!

You might think that such action plans would lead to a directive approach. They did not. If, after a thorough discussion, the very women who had voiced a felt need did not want to take action, did not accept the ideas or options for action casually dropped by the Women Adviser in the spirit of ‘leading from behind’, and did not propose alternatives of their own, that was it. The women we worked with always made their own decisions on priorities, on action and on time-frames. Women Advisers had to make sure that they selected problems that had already been voiced and on which women were prepared to act.

Women Advisers’ monthly work plan was now to be based on the programme plans. Although they all worked on three plans, I made sure that they left half their working days free to accommodate unanticipated requests and events, and tasks assigned by the DC or Wyn Wilson, via me. I certainly did not want them to get into the sort of over-commitment that I had manoeuvred myself into.

The next morning we had a group discussion about possible conflict between my and the DC’s expectations of their work, about problems they faced when they had to make choices about priorities and about what types of requests for assistance to accept.

The agricultural officer for Zviyambe, Mr McCarthy, came to have tea with us to discuss the agricultural programme for the area and how the Women Adviser could be involved. He showed us photographs he had taken of the ‘Women Intensive Conservation Area Groundnut Competition’ and offered them for the ‘Challenge and Achievement’ exhibition.

We then continued working on the programme plans. Mrs Sakuringwa created an innovative one. She had defined one problem as:

Many women and women’s groups in my work area are disappointed because I do not have the time to meet all the requests for assistance I receive or for visits. Their progress is slower than it could be if I had more time, and some of the groups’ leadership problems drag on.

She planned to involve the HEDs in her community development work (over and above the homecraft skills they were teaching) so that she and the voluntary workers could become a team. She could then delegate

some of the requests she received to them and allow them to respond. In her plan she included training for the HEDs in such matters as club and interest-group management (the roles of various committee members). She herself would undertake this training. Susan Sakuringwa was perfectly capable of doing this. Her plan worked and she created a very effective team. In one of my follow-up visits, a number of groups told me how pleased they were with the HEDs' lessons on club management; the HEDs told me that they had grown in stature in the communities' perception.

The seminar ended with a visit to Mrs Sakuringwa's home in the Zviyambe APA. Her husband received us with great hospitality. In their homestead, Mrs Sakuringwa had implemented everything that our Section encouraged women to do. There was a well, a Blair toilet, a pot stand, an appropriate-technology contraption so that you could wash your hands under running water instead of the bowl that was traditionally offered around, chicken and rabbit runs, a fenced vegetable garden, a compost heap, a rubbish pit, a Dutch oven in the garden, and so on. Theirs was a model homestead. I wish I had taken photos of her home and yard or had asked the Ministry of Information to do so for the 'Challenge and Achievement' exhibition.

I loved her kitchen. It was built in the traditional style (though with bricks), round and thatched, with a depression for the fire in the middle, but there was a wrought-iron pot stand over it that held the pots firmly in place so that none could spill accidentally.³ The thatched roof had a thatch-covered vent through which the smoke could escape, so the inside of the kitchen was not covered in soot. But pride of place was taken by a pot shelf, modelled in clay, on which were stacked the most beautiful traditional pots, each one just a fraction smaller than the one below it. They were not only expertly fashioned but had that beautiful ringing tone that indicated expert firing when they were knocked with the knuckles. Susan Sakuringwa actually only used these pots for important traditional gatherings, and preferred to cook in the commercially available enamelled pots (Kango, of course), but the array was very decorative.

On 25 and 26 February, I led a seminar for four Women Advisers of Goromonzi District at the Goromonzi district station, also devoted to programme planning. It was attended by L. Mukombiwa, P. Muguto, R. Chivanga and R. Guzha. My temporary assistant, Cleret Gumbochena, accompanied me. Combining individual work, group work, instruction, problem-solving sessions and, where needed, interviews with individuals

³ All too often, clinics had to treat serious burns on small children who had been scalded by boiling water or food when pots fell over.

and discussions with district administration and other district staff, it was typical of the seminars held in other districts. While all the participants had to produce three programme plans for the year, the Goromonzi Women Advisers wanted to work on 'improving communication between women and councils', so we ended up consolidating one plan that all of them could use.



When I advised the DCs about the Women Advisers' seminars in writing, I also specifically asked them to allocate me some time to discuss issues arising from the Women Advisers' work and general co-operation between district and province. A pattern was beginning to emerge in those discussions. There was distinctly more interest in the work and achievements of the Women Advisers than there had been when I started work in 1973, but this led to complaints that I, their provincial officer, was not giving them enough supervision.

The DC Gatooma, Anthony Cozens, was in favour of employing temporary women staff – local white women with an interest in women's clubs, who would not be part of the Internal Affairs 'regular' structure – to take responsibility for work with women at district level. He said that male administrative staff (women officers were still a rarity) did not have the time, nor could they be expected to take sufficient interest in 'women's work' to give the Women Advisers the support that I expected from them. The DC Hartley was of the same opinion.

While in my heart of hearts I would not have minded such temporary staff to support the homecraft aspects of women's clubs, which were still the most common women's interest group, I had strong reservations. However, would these temporary staff draw the Women Advisers back into the sphere of domestic skills while I was trying to make them concentrate on other aspects of women's development? Perhaps I should have accepted this suggestion more enthusiastically and helped such temporary women staff concentrate on supporting HEDs and the area trainers. Sometimes time constraints and fatigue prevented me from thinking more creatively. I should have taken a leaf out of Mrs Sakuringwa's book.

Since they could not be expected to take an interest in women's interest groups, I asked whether male district officers might be prepared to assist in narrowing the communication gap between women residents and councils, and possibly help encourage councils to sponsor adult literacy programmes. It seemed not.

In Mudzi and Mtoko, once again, pressure on the DCs' time was

evident. John Saunders (Mtoko), for example, had to attend JOC meetings twice a day. Nevertheless, both he and Charles Collett (Mudzi) took seriously the improvement in co-operation that I was aiming at. Charles Collett allocated time to attend the Women Advisers' three-day seminar one evening and very full discussions took place. John Saunders found time for an hour's discussion at the end of my stay, which I truly appreciated but which, of course, made me very late driving home. Travelling back in the dark, I nearly drove under the back of a huge lorry carrying black granite from the Mtoko quarry that had neither working rear lights nor a reflective strip.

Both DCs had complained that I did not visit often enough and pointed out how much better (i.e. more frequently) Agricultural Demonstrators were supervised by the Principal Agricultural Officer, Dave Ford. I felt that this was an insidious comparison, as he was responsible for work in only those two districts and for far fewer fieldworkers. Both had said that their administrative staff did not have the time for 'women's work' and that, in any case, it needed specialized attention. Both requested me to attend the monthly district staff meetings 'to fit in better'. I should visit PVs and CVs monthly.

Keep commanders were in no position to give the women workers support: they came and went so frequently that they could only be briefed on security matters – nor were they likely to be interested in 'women's work'. They had come to fight a war, or at least to keep the PV in order during the spell they were there. It was I who had to brief them. DC Mtoko went further: he suggested that I request the PC to give me a time slot during the next DCs' conference to explain what I was doing and why I was doing it so that DCs could question and discuss its implications during wartime. His ADC, R. Boell, suggested that temporary women staff be employed at district level to work with women and women field staff. 'Of course,' he added, 'they could not be expected to travel to PVs.'

Peter Lombard, DC Goromonzi, was different. Despite my asking to meet him – in writing, and well ahead of the three-day seminar at his station – he hardly acknowledged my presence and could not spare me more than ten minutes in passing. During my discussions with his staff, it was evident that I needed to do much work to improve co-operation. What a change in attitude from that of his predecessor!

It was worse with DC Mrewa, whom the people had nicknamed *Kambada* (little leopard) or *Chamangwiza* (the energetic one). Dave Mirams did not like me personally, resented that I 'by-passed' his office when I flew into the Nyakasoro PV, and let it be known that I was 'interfering' in his district. When I drove to his office for no other purpose

than to meet him, he was rude. Once, his wife – who had some role at the station, probably accounting – discreetly left the office when he was unacceptably disagreeable towards me. Eventually things came to a head and a ‘confrontation’ meeting – today, it would be called a ‘conflict resolution’ meeting – took place in his office, chaired by our PC, Lionel Leach.

How do I describe Dave Mirams? Ambitious, energetic, an excellent linguist, efficient, very effective in ‘getting things done’ – qualities for which he was highly respected within the ministry. However, in my view he was excessively autocratic and arrogant. He certainly did not believe in ‘leading from behind’. Once I asked him why he did not join the army where every junior would salute him and jump. After Lionel Leach’s intervention his overt manners towards me improved.

Later, Dave Mirams used his ‘ground coverage’ team (his network of informers) to report on my activities, as I found out one day from one of his women informers herself.⁴ Even though I really had nothing to hide, I was deeply offended. By mid-1977, I had reason to think that he had reported to provincial headquarters that I was ‘politically suspect’.

Penny Ross had a similarly disagreeable relationship with a similarly autocratic DC, Jim Latham in Mount Darwin. She remembered in 2013:

This incredibly arrogant man insisted, with much relish, when I landed at Mountt Darwin one day, that there were no vehicles or escorts to take me to Dotito and Nembire, even though he knew I had flown up for that specific purpose and that the Development Workers were grouping their club members together to meet with me. No vehicle? No escort? The DC’s Land-Rover was languishing in the Intaf garage – with the keys in the ignition, having just been serviced – so I appropriated it and took off on my own.

I had a number of adventures, one being stuck in a river-crossing while a fireforce attack erupted within earshot ahead of me. When that was over, after what seemed a very long time, two African men appeared and helped me push the vehicle out. I proceeded and I did accomplish my purpose and all was well.

His only words when I got back a few days later were ‘a pity the terrors didn’t take you out’. I felt that I had been complimented! Even Wyn Wilson, although she duly reprimanded me, owned

⁴ From its early days, Internal Affairs was considered to be the eyes and ears of the government. When staff were on patrol they had the responsibility to make contact with the people to determine their feelings, likes and dislikes. When the war started and intensified, Intaf was tasked by the highest level of government to obtain intelligence for security purposes, working in conjunction with the police, particularly the Special Branch. District Assistants and paid informers were used to gather information. See ‘Intaf Ground Coverage’, *Rhodesia – Intaf*, <<http://www.freewebs.com/dudleywall/intafgroundcoverage.htm>>.

that she felt some satisfaction that Jim Latham had been bested to some degree, as he was evidently doing so very little willingly to facilitate our work.

Only in Marandellas District were the Women Advisers and I adequately (perfectly) supported, by Cadet Debbie Allan, backed by DC Brian Lucas.



In March 1976 I was offered a temporary way out of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Professor Marshall Murphree, Director of the Centre for Inter-racial Studies at the University of Rhodesia, wrote to the ministry:

The University of Rhodesia is launching a research project on social factors influencing the employment of African Women [both in the rural and in the urban sector of the economy], which we feel would be of considerable interest to your Ministry. We are, therefore, inviting the participation of your Ministry in this project, in the form of a member of your staff, Mrs Maia Chenaux-Repond, for the period of the research, which will run from May 1st 1976 to April 30th 1977.

An outline of the research project is given below.

The scope of the work could be considerably increased with the addition to the research team of an experienced research worker with a wide knowledge of the particular field of investigation – namely, Mrs Maia Chenaux-Repond, who prior to joining your ministry was a member of the university staff.

[description of the project]

Mrs Chenaux-Repond would be carrying out a considerable amount of research on her own and it would be possible for her to submit a thesis separate from the main report, for the degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) of the University of Rhodesia, provide that the requirements for registration are met.

It is hoped that Mrs Chenaux-Repond can be lent to the Centre for this work as we feel that her contribution will greatly add to the value of the research, both for yourselves and the project as a whole.

Yours faithfully,

Marshall Murphree

Professor Murphree's proposal was flattering. Obviously I had been appreciated at the university more than I had been aware of. The possibility of doing an M.Phil. during working time, so to speak, was very tempting

indeed. But by now I was 'wedded' to my work with the Women Advisers and Development Workers; it would have been a terrible wrench to tear myself away for a year.

My Provincial Commissioner was supportive. On 24 March he wrote to the Secretary for Internal Affairs:

I feel that we should help the University. We will benefit from the results of the research, not only from the information coming out of it but also from the experience gained by Mrs Chenaux-Repond.

My thinking is that the time has come when the ministry needs a research officer in our women's section of community development and we are fortunate to have somebody like Mrs Chenaux-Repond who is ideally suited in every way to undertake this research. We need to have someone to evaluate our tremendous efforts in the development of our African women and to carry out the highly specialized functions of researching every aspect of community development amongst women.

I have two recommendations:

- Release Mrs Chenaux-Repond. I can use Miss Allan to replace her.
- Have a post of Research Officer created in time to absorb Mrs Chenaux-Repond when she returns to us from the university on 1st May, 1977.

L. G. Leach

However, administrators higher up in the hierarchy did not bite. Nor did Wyn Wilson. Thus I was relieved of making a personal decision. I don't know what happened to the research programme.



The fight for an assistant had taken me an extraordinary amount of time. It started with time-and-motion records, kept meticulously for months, and an analysis of how much time I spent on what type of task, until an inspection of my job was made by the PSB inspectorate – whose report was mysteriously lost, but whose recommendation for a clerical assistant was found a few months later.

I had made a minute analysis of what jobs could immediately be given to a clerical assistant, but I had also determined how much more could immediately be taken on by Debbie Allan and had attached that to my

monthly report for March 1976. Most of these supporting documents are tedious to read now – a product of analysis, over-analysis and more over-over-analysis, of an increasingly tired and frustrated mind, sitting at a desk, working ever more overtime to produce them.

In a business situation, the head of a line function would see, I imagined, that an additional member of staff would be needed to make an operation more efficient and effective and, provided the cost would be exceeded by the benefit, would hire promptly. In the public service such decisions are made once a year at budget time, sometimes by bureaucrats far removed from the action. A post for an assistant was simply not going to happen any time soon.

A discussion therefore took place on 9 February between Lionel Leach, myself and Debbie Allan, and it was agreed that Debbie would assist me in the provincial office during the periods 1-5 and 8-12 March. She would spend time at the district office to hand over her responsibilities there to Cadet Miss B. Collins and then start work in my office on 1 April. With effect from 1 July 1976, the post of District Officer, to which Debbie was due to be promoted, would be transferred from the district to the provincial office. In the meantime, the PC would pursue the establishment of a clerical assistant's post. Debbie would train the incumbent before eventually returning to the district office. In any case, her position would be reviewed in twelve months' time.

And Debbie Allan came. A second desk was put into my office to accommodate her. As a personal assistant, Debbie was a dream! While I was out doing fieldwork or training, she put a perfect organizational system into my office, digested all the written material that came in – from correspondence and circulars to fieldworkers' monthly reports. When I came back I would find a row of papers, aligned with military precision, on my otherwise clear desk and arranged from left to right in order of priority. All the routine correspondence had already been responded to and typed up awaiting my signature. I never did have to make any changes. Reports had a sheet of paper clipped to their front, alerting me to important matters either for my information or my action. I was never bothered with those piles of ugly, tattered files that usually clutter up the desks of civil servants: they stayed on the shelves or on Debbie's desk. All I had to do was sign the letters she had drafted, leave a note about what to do in respect of some of the reports, diarize events that I had been alerted to, and draft some responses myself. Items I had dealt with were to be put into a wire tray that Debbie had put at the ready on my desk and that I put on hers when I left. She dealt with them expertly the next day.

Debbie had needed practically no induction: she herself had been a

PCDOW for almost a year and had also written the paper to her DC referred to above.⁵ On a personal level, we got on well. Laughter returned to my office! My gnawing sense of isolation eased. Debbie had a clear grasp of how Internal Affairs functioned at district level, was loyal to her Marandellas DC and colleagues, but could chuckle at the follies of the monster bureaucracy that the ministry was, after all. While she was well aware of the much better promotion prospects and pay that the Administration Section offered, she had a great deal of love and understanding for the work of the Community Development Section (Women). We laughed together when we found out – or, rather, when she alerted me to the fact – that her salary was already better than mine...

Debbie helped me with sympathetic advice on how to improve my interaction with district staff. At her suggestion, a very fruitful meeting took place in my office between us and ADC Boell from Mtoko. Thanks to her district experience, she was more credible to the ADC than I was, so she was able to give him many positive suggestions about how even a male District Officer could support Women Advisers and Development Workers. She did her best to disabuse him of his notion that 'women's work' was boring.

My joy was short-lived. Someone in the know and within the power structure pointed out to Debbie by that her detour into 'women's work' was likely to adversely affect her chances for promotion, so she returned to Marandellas forthwith. She had set her eyes clearly on the post of District Commissioner. Hopefully she would be the first woman DC!

For years and years, Cadets, District Officers and District Commissioners had been exclusively male. Only in later years, as Internal Affairs found it more and more difficult to recruit staff, was the field opened to women. White women had a slight edge, in the ministry's opinion, over African males, whom they would otherwise have to start recruiting. On the other hand, they did not take them quite seriously. It seemed to me that the idea was that young female staff in the districts would soon enough be married to single male officers, be good girls, have babies and become housewives. They were in for a shock when they discovered that some of the women they had recruited had the ambition of becoming DCs.

Later on, back in the district office and having been promoted, District Officer Debbie Allan committed a serious misdeed for a woman officer in the Administrative Section of Internal Affairs: she got married! Her sin was compounded by her marrying a man whose rank in the ministry

⁵ 'Orientation of Administrative Staff Responsible for Community Development (Women): Marandellas'. See page 211.

was lower than hers! Barry Enslin, though older than she was, was still a Cadet!⁶ As I have pointed out before, a woman civil servant had to resign upon marriage. This she did on a Friday, but at the same time she filed an application for her own post, which was due to become vacant. The latter was post-dated to the Monday and signed in her married name. Her DC, Brian Lucas,⁷ duly filled in the 'cessation of duty' form on the Friday, acted as marriage officer for Debbie and Barry on the Saturday, reappointed Debbie on the Monday to her former post, and filled out the 'commencement of duty' forms for a person who now had a different name. It took some time for all those papers to reach the same official in the head office staffing section – were they posted separately? It created a furore, but nothing could be done. Such a situation had been entirely unanticipated and no regulation could be found to forbid it, though, strictly speaking, the power of appointment must ultimately have been with the Public Services Board.

Nevertheless, Debbie had to attend an interview at head office. It was pointed out to her that surely it was a difficult situation, given that her rank was higher than her husband's. 'It does not bother either my husband or myself,' Debbie assured them. The PSB, she was then told, could not guarantee that both husband and wife would be transferred to the same district. Surely, that would be an impossible situation? She would then at least have to resign? 'No,' said Debbie. 'I would not resign. We have discussed this. We would not mind living separately for a while. And, if the separation became too long, it would be my husband who would resign, not me.' 'Your husband?! Surely, as the head of the family...?' 'We have discussed this, too,' Debbie said. 'Barry might quite like some time off and become a house husband [unheard of in Rhodesia!]. Besides, he has always wanted to write a book.' Debbie, Barry, Brian and I spent half an hour laughing merrily in the district office at the way Debbie had handled the interview.⁸

Debbie retained her position and, indeed, she was promoted two years later to Assistant District Commissioner, the first woman to be promoted to this rank. Her promotion was announced to the (black) District

⁶ Barry Enslin had served in the police force before joining Internal Affairs and hence was behind in terms of period worked within the ministry. Points towards promotion were accumulated for qualifications, in-service examinations passed, and for time served.

⁷ Brian H. Lucas was one of the youngest DCs that the ministry had ever had. His rapid promotion was partly because he had entered service with a university degree. New conditions of service had been introduced when Internal Affairs had found it difficult to attract staff.

⁸ As a matter of fact, Debbie and Barry Enslin were transferred together to Mrewa District in early 1979. Both had by this time gained the rank of Assistant District Commissioner. Considering the difficult security situation in that district, three ADCs were actually stationed at Mrewa. Barry later attained the rank of District Commissioner. However, the couple emigrated during 1980.

Assistants at the daily morning parade. As an ADC she would soon be expected to take cases in the DC's court. Debbie overheard the District Assistants (DAs), who were huddled together after the announcement, lamenting to each other that 'men are now finished' and went to enquire. It transpired that the men thought that in seduction and divorce cases a woman ADC would inevitably rule in favour of the woman. Debbie explained that there were laws to which DCs had to adhere when judging cases. The men were not convinced. It appeared that the DAs felt that male DCs were mercifully biased in favour of their fellow men!

There was another woman officer who committed the 'marriage sin'. Nicola Moss had joined Internal Affairs in 1974 as a Cadet and had served in Melsetter, Buhera, Gatooma and QueQue. In 1977, by now Senior District Officer, she married ADC Jim Collins. Nicola had to resign upon marriage. Her pension contributions were returned to her and she had to apply to re-join Internal Affairs. She was re-accepted and, in 1978, transferred to Zaka together with her husband, who had by now attained the rank of DC. Both were then transferred to Nuanetsi. They left the ministry in 1980.⁹



In the (still) non-sensitive district of Marandellas, HEDs Mrs P. Mubaiwa and Mrs J. Muronzi, who were also Red Cross trainees at the Westwood Training Centre in Salisbury, demonstrated the spirit of voluntary work in Chiota TTL beyond expectations. Concerned about girl school-leavers, they conducted a one-month's Red Cross course for such girls and invited Ruth Tucker, Director of the Red Cross Society, to test the girls. Mrs Tucker did so and declared that they satisfied the requirements for the Red Cross certificate! She awarded them a certificate especially designed for these circumstances.

Both HEDs were now holding weekly 'Red Cross classes' for other girl school-leavers. The only 'reward' they asked for was funding for the demonstration materials they needed for these classes. They drew up a list of requirements, which Mrs Tucker scrutinized and approved. I was able to give them the necessary funds from my modest S1 vote.



⁹ For a full treatment of the 'marriage bar', how it functioned within the Public Service initially and how it was slowly eroded, see Ushewedu Kufakurinani, 'Negotiating respectability: White women in the Public Service of Southern Rhodesia', *Online Journal of Social Sciences Research* (July 2012), 1(4), 115-24.

During 1976 WGL offered two one-week sewing courses and two one-week playgroup courses at Domboshawa and other Salisbury venues reserved for women from the war areas. Both FAWC and CWC again asked me to do the recruiting, via the Women Advisers. I asked the WGL whether they would be prepared to accept Development Workers and Women Advisers on their playgroup courses. Not only did they need training to advise mothers in the running of such groups, but in some difficult PVs and CVs they initiated and sometimes even ran playgroups themselves. While this was definitely not part of their job, I condoned it where it was indicated by circumstances. We were able to fill twenty places on the two dressmaking courses and twenty-five places on the two playgroup courses in May and June.

The Red Cross Society, whose one-month home-nursing courses were very popular in all districts, said that they would give special consideration to applicants from sensitive districts that came through me. I was delighted.

In the non-sensitive districts, the council awareness training for women conducted by the BCDT mobile training unit during 1975 had been a great success. A total of 2,954 women had attended during the year. I was, of course, very pleased about their interest in civic affairs. The attendance figures had impressed even my Provincial Commissioners. Women Advisers in Gatooma, Hartley, Wedza, Goromonzi, Marandellas and even Mrewa, had made further requests for the period January-June 1976 and indicated preferred dates, venue and type of lessons required – initial or follow-up.

To save them transport costs, the mobile training unit, as a matter of policy, used to offer lifts to representatives of voluntary organizations, and particularly of women's club organizations, to the venues at which they taught. Women Advisers asked for this not to be done this year when the unit had been invited specifically to teach women about councils. They argued that if such representatives came with the unit they had to be given time to speak on homecraft topics, which would interfere with the local-government lessons. In addition, Women Advisers asked for specific films to be brought and shown after civic affairs classes. They would ask a local person knowledgeable on the subject to comment, or they would do the commenting themselves.

Provincial Commissioners G.D. Carlisle (Mashonaland West) and L.G. Leach (Mashonaland East) supported this initiative by notifying the relevant DCs. In some areas, men complained that such training should have been arranged for them also.

We graciously allowed them to join in.

In the sensitive districts, my visits to CVs and PVs continued. In Nyamande CV, Mudzi district, Annah Mugumisi and Grace Makwembere

had grouped thirty women and girls from Navaya and Tera kraals. We discussed the problems of living in a CV and the possibility of establishing literacy classes. A man who had been trained as a Literacy Teacher and had worked in the programme established by the innovative Agricultural Officer, Dave Ford, was to supposed meet us. However, he did not come and left the area altogether shortly afterwards, after a violent incident.

Nine of the twelve adult women who came wanted to learn to read and write; so did fifteen of the eighteen girls. The women wanted mainly to learn to write letters and to be able to read the letters they received, so that they no longer had to be dependent on someone else having to read them to them. The girls felt keenly that they had never had the opportunity to go to school. We discussed the commitment required, the length of time it would probably take them to learn to read and write, and the cost.

Tuition would be given free of charge, but they had to pay for the books.¹⁰ No student would be admitted before the 40¢ was paid. No person below the age of fifteen could be admitted – a rule stipulated by the Ministry of Education, who did not want children to be diverted from regular schools. Several girls wanted to pay on the spot; others said that they would work on someone's field to earn the 40¢ and pay by the end of the month. The mothers were prepared to pay, too. Birth certificates to prove the girls' ages would be a difficulty, as none of them appeared to have one. In practice we decided to ignore this requirement as long as a girl looked as if she could be fifteen. I knew I had to find literacy teachers fast.

I met Development Workers Evangelista Muderedzi and Joy Muvhiyiwa of Msau/Kondo CV (Mudzi district) at the district office during the Women Advisers' seminar. Most Development Workers lived and worked amazingly well together, but in their case a serious personality clash had erupted. Joy indicated that she would like to work with Lucy Lea Made, to whom she was distantly related, in Mutawatawa PV (Mrewa district). Realizing that the two were unlikely to ever work well together, I decided that I would look into the logistics of transfers on my return to the office, but I immediately assigned Women Advisers Psuura and Chibisa supervisory powers. I knew that this was not going to be of much avail, though, as they would not be able to visit often. I did so because I knew that they would give the young women motherly pep talks on how to comport themselves.

¹⁰ Shona primer: 15¢; Kiyi No. 1 (the first reader): 3¢; one pencil: 4¢; one book for writing, another for doing arithmetic: 9¢ each.

I met Eugenia Machiridza (Nyakosoro PV, Mrewa District) during a visit to the PV on 11 February. She had been without a co-worker since Grace Nhumba had left the ministry in January. Although she felt safe, she was lonely. Eugenia and Grace had been able to achieve a lot – even the wife of Chief Chitsungo had joined the club that the women had established. I had to inspect the balaclavas, hats, shawls and mats that they had already made, and the man's shirt that was in progress. Once again a number of women said they wanted to learn to read and write. Chief Chitsungo, who had moved to the village in June 1975, came to greet me, declared himself pleased with the work of the Development Workers, and asked me to come and stay in the village for several days 'to see what is really going on here'. Intuition told me that he did not just want me to see what the women were achieving. I knew by now that interrogations of suspected terrorist supporters were taking place in the PV and that torture was being resorted to.

Lucy Lea Made and Maina Matema of Mutawatawa PV had arranged to meet me at Nyakosoro also, getting a lift on one of the armoured vehicles used by the administration. We discussed their reports, work progress and personal problems. Maina told me that she would have to resign from the ministry at the end of the month owing to family problems at home. Lucy Lea said she would be pleased to work with Joy Muvhiyiwa (cf. the personality conflict at Kondo noted above). After my visit I recommended Joy's transfer and also that both Lucy and Joy attend the playgroup course offered by WGL, as development work with women was not progressing in Mutawatawa and the Development Workers seemed to spend much of their time keeping children occupied. As I have already said, this was definitely not part of their role. Attending a playgroup course might give them the skills and motivation to encourage mothers to organize and run a playgroup themselves.

I was delighted to be able to place Development Workers who had been trained as Literacy Teachers by ALOR both at Nyakasoro and Nyamande almost immediately. Prisca Dumba was stationed at Nyakosoro on 25 March, replacing Grace Nhumba, who had resigned to be married. Synodia Nyamana went to Nyamande on 1 April. Because of the short notice I had been given, I could neither meet nor brief either of them before they were stationed. However, they were quickly accepted by the villagers. Literacy Teachers had been long awaited.



I recall a story of a novel intervention by Development Workers in a remote area, which I can no longer place in time or location. This team came up with a novel cure for kwashiorkor, though it was not strictly above board. They discovered several toddlers with severe symptoms of protein deficiency in their diet. The mothers maintained that it was a specific spirit that caused the 'disease'. Unfortunately, they said, 'the situation' prevented them to go to the traditional healer who could 'divine' who had caused the spirit to take revenge on the children.

The Development Workers did not believe this, but were desperate to save the toddlers. Thus they developed a cure. They told the mothers that there had been a similar spirit in a remote area that they had worked in before (a fabrication) and that they had been taught a ritual to drive him out. Their imaginative ritual involved the elaborate stirring of a soft mealie-meal porridge to which peanut butter had been added, much prayer and 'speaking in tongues', and the pouring of a bit of home-brewed beer at the foot of a tree while the toddlers were being fed the porridge.

By the time I visited, the children's condition had much improved. I was somewhat perturbed at this deception, but the Development Workers told me that there was no time to lose: 'Nobody is interested in the nutrition lessons we have suggested. They say, "we have to eat what we have", and if they come to lessons in the future, it will take time for them to accept such new ideas.'

They had a point. I had sat in during nutrition lessons being given to illiterate women in remote areas before, thinking that either it comes to an act of faith or it doesn't. The same applied to lessons on the causes of diseases. Our stories about very small things – things that are so small that you can't see them (what would a microscope mean to them?) – getting into you and making you sick must have sounded as fantastic to them as their stories about disgruntled spirits or witches causing illness sounded to us.

Lionel Leach was much concerned about the youth. On 24 March 1976, he wrote:

There is a tremendous need in the tribal areas for workers to identify themselves with the large number of Africans who leave school and have nothing to do, day in and day out. This is a countrywide problem but I realize that funds are so limited today that we just cannot tackle this on a national level.

I therefore put in an appeal for youth workers to be made available for the three operational districts in this province, namely Mudzi, Mtoko and Mrewa. I would like to see both male and female workers provided, but would settle for females as a starter, in the knowledge that the thirst for learning and the will to do something about it in practical terms lies largely amongst the female African population. ... These women could work under the control of our existing Women Advisers.

I appreciated his concern for school-leavers. He also hoped that fewer youngsters would 'cross the border' if they had interesting options in the country. So often, when I visited the home of one of the voluntary workers or of a women's club member, I met a young girl who could not go to school, either because the money was lacking in the home or because of the bottleneck in the provision of education for African youngsters: there were too few secondary-school places for children who had passed Grade 7.

When I asked them what they were doing, I got the standard reply: 'Nothing, I am just seated.' I always asked them to enumerate what they had actually been doing during the past week. Almost without exception they had helped their parents in the fields, even tended cattle, had helped their mothers in caring for younger siblings and with household chores. I tried to tell them how valuable this work was, that it was not 'nothing'. However, most had but one wish: To continue with their education.



In April 1976 I spent only three days in my office. I spent one day at head office, discussing the Development Workers' and the proposed Administrative Assistant's job descriptions and, in town, held discussions with WGL about the courses the women's organizations were offering to women's club members in general and to women in the operational areas in particular.

Then I underwent a day's weapon training at the police range, together with fellow provincial officers. I knew how to handle a pistol. In years past I had shared in Rolf's hobby of target shooting at the Cleveland Pistol Club range on the Arcturus Road on Salisbury's outskirts. I had practised both target and practical (combat) shooting with revolvers and pistols. I had even won a few prizes at minor events but I had never become a keen or competitive shottist. Frankly, the sport required too much discipline and concentration and I wanted to relax at weekends.

I acquitted myself well on the police firing range with various types of guns, I think to the astonishment of my male colleagues and the instructor alike. I did not mention my previous experience and left them to their comments about 'beginner's luck'. However, I did not carry a weapon to the sensitive areas, mainly because I did not want to be seen by the people as 'part of the war effort' but also because I did not trust myself to use it against another human being. I believed in the principle that if you carry a weapon you have to be prepared to use it first and fast in a case of doubt, otherwise it will be turned against you.

Concerned about my safety, Rolf eventually crafted me a beautifully embossed stiff leather case for a pistol, which I could take into the field as it looked like a small handbag but could also be carried on a belt. The pistol fitted snugly and firmly inside. While it did not draw special attention to itself, together with the other 'katundu' I had to carry - a square basket, neatly fitted out with square food containers, and a brown Monarch cardboard suitcase (the type all older school children, black and white, carried their books in) containing my field-office requirements - I still did not feel comfortable carrying a weapon.

The morning after the weapons' training day I drove to Zviyambe, an APA near Rusape but part of Wedza District, to interview applicants for the HEDs course and to witness the finals of a groundnut-growing competition among women farmers. In fact, nobody within their own

community would have called them 'women farmers'. They were 'wives of farmers'. The 'farmer', as was repeatedly explained to me by men, is the one who owns the land, even if he is absent in employment in town. Groundnuts, if not grown on the husband's field as a cash crop, are a 'women's crop', grown in her 'spare time' – that is, when she is not working on her husband's field, fetching water, collecting firewood, tending children, raising chickens, or doing household chores – on a portion of land allocated to her by her husband. She may keep the produce and retain it for household use or sell or barter it as she wishes. Like the income that a wife might accrue from making clay pots or for services as a midwife, it was part of her *maoko* (the property she has worked for with her own hands) and formed part of her estate.

This group of farmers' wives in Zviyambe had formed a farming group specifically for their groundnut plots and received advice from agricultural extension staff, who also acted as judges for the competition. The women themselves had clubbed together to purchase prizes.



Since my husband Rolf was building a road from somewhat north of Golden Valley to Sanyati, and as it was school holidays, I took the opportunity to make a four-day visit to Sanyati TTL from 12 to 15 April, taking my children Caroline and Yvonne with me. Sue was visiting her friend Robyn in Bulawayo, whose family owned horses.

The road towards Sanyati, just after Jompani, passed for some kilometres through extraordinary soil. If you bent down and let the soil trickle through your fingers, it felt like talcum powder. During the dry season your car made dust rise in thick clouds. If you had a lorry travelling ahead of you, it was best to just stop and let the powder settle. If there was no breeze, this took time – the fine white dust hung suspended for a long time in the still air. Putting on your lights made matters worse, as each minuscule particle reflected the light. During the wet season the area turned into a morass. Cars and lorries routinely got stuck and churned up the road leaving deep ruts.

The cotton farmers of Gokwe TTL, across the Sanyati river, resolved to have the road tarred. They levied themselves on each bale of cotton transported to the spinney in Gatooma. When they thought they had collected enough money to tar the road they brought it to their DC and asked him to organize the upgrading of the road. As they did not have the expertise to ask for a tender themselves, they had little idea of what such a road would cost, and the amount they had collected was not

nearly large enough. However, the Secretary for Internal Affairs was so impressed by this community initiative that he saw to it that the rest of the money was forthcoming from government coffers. There was some red tape to go through before government money could be released because apparently it was not legal for farmers to levy themselves on their cotton sales. Such levies could only be imposed by government: an amendment to the relevant act and regulations had to be passed by Parliament. It duly happened, and Highway Construction (Pvt) Ltd, managed by Rolf, secured the contract to upgrade and tar the road.

We camped with Rolf at the Highway Construction road camp, which had been erected in a woodland some 500 metres off the road. The workers were accommodated about a kilometre away in huts walled with gum poles and roofed with metal sheets cut from empty tar drums and flattened.

Frank Agar, Rolf's site agent, had his caravan in the woodland on a concrete slab and under the cover of a huge tarpaulin, which created a big, shaded 'veranda'. Rolf slept there on his supervisory visits. Highway took on a camp cook, Nicholas Chisingaluta, who later worked for the company as a labourer and eventually as a watchman. His kitchen was a pole-and-daga hut and he cooked on a cast-iron wood stove. Rolf and Frank took bucket showers under a nearby tree after dark; water was provided by a bowser. A 'long-drop' toilet, situated about fifty metres from the camp, completed their amenities.

One evening, on his way to there, Rolf heard a loud hissing noise on the path in front of him. The light of the torch revealed a large puff adder. It was put into a bucket with a lid, for closer examination in the morning. However, at first light the lid was off the bucket and the snake had gone.



Rolf's camp at Sanyati

For our visit, Rolf erected our family tent at a little distance from the main camp. Shaded by trees and surrounded by vellozias, popularly known as *bobbejaan sterts* (baboon tails), the site gave us a lovely surprise on the last morning of our stay. After a long dry spell there had been light rain the afternoon before, probably the last of the season. We woke up to the rough, woody, dark-grey vellozia trunks covered in delicate bell-like white blossoms that had emerged overnight.

We spent the first day at the home of Women Adviser Mrs Bertha Chida, the girls happily exploring while we worked. With Mary Chijaka, a trainee Women Adviser from Mudzi on a field placement with Mrs Chida, I discussed her experiences in the field, what she had learned from them, and her draft report on her field placement. With Mrs Chida I discussed the progress she had made towards the objectives she had set herself at the beginning of 1976, her monthly reports and her reports on local courses. With every paragraph we read together, both were to hear my query: 'Does it answer the questions When? What? With whom? Why? and (if possible) With what results?' And my refrain: 'Be specific!'

We had lunch together and looked at every aspect of Mrs Chida's homestead with the children: her neatly swept sandy yard, her vegetable garden, her well, her pot stand, her rub-bish pit, her Blair toilet and her impressive fowl run.



Left to right: Caroline, Yvonne, Mary Chjaka, the women's club leader, and Women Adviser Mrs Bertha Chida

On our way back to the camp, laden with farm produce from Mrs Chida's plot and running a little late, my faithful car developed a puncture. Yvonne remembers that a wheel fell right off. The battery of my torch having run flat, I set up a candle in the gravel and changed the wheel. I always had candles in my car, as part of my survival kit. The girls thought this was very thrilling! While unloading the vegetables and eggs from the boot to extract the spare wheel and jack, I again relished the peace and the sense of safety that I felt in this part of the province.

The next day we spent at Chief Neuso's *dare*.¹ In the presence of the

¹ A court or meeting place, usually out of doors, often under a shady tree.

chief and his wife and members of the District Committee of Women's Clubs I presented badges to HEDs, acknowledging the voluntary work they had been doing in Sanyati TTL and Chenjiri APA. Each gave a short report on the work she had been doing since her training. The chief did us the honour of dressing in his full regalia for the little ceremony – in his robe, pith helmet and the brass half-moon, with its insignia, on a heavy brass chain on his chest. Everybody was delighted that I had brought my children with me.

After the witnesses to the presentation and the chief had left, I elicited Mrs Neuso's thoughts on the needs of women in her area, her own involvement in community development and her own training needs. Later we adjourned to have our picnic lunch at a pretty shaded woodland spot, from where we proceeded to Chief Whozele's home to have a similar discussion with his wife to the one I had had with Mrs Neuso.

On the third morning Caroline and Yvonne were happy to remain at the Highway Construction camp, chatting with Nicholas and gathering wood with him, and, in the afternoon, to accompany Rolf to his work. On our last day, 15 April, the Women Advisers, the girls and I visited Gowe irrigation scheme administered by TILCOR, the Tribal Trust Land Development Corporation. A conducted tour had kindly been arranged by DC Tony Cozens. I also had a chance to show Rolf the rest camp on the banks of the Sanyati River, where I usually spent the night when visiting Sanyati.

We all enjoyed this time with Rolf. For me it was amazing sitting in the road camp at night with my family, looking up at the starlit sky, listening to the night noises of various small animals and the rustling leaves, in utter peace and perfect safety. Who would have thought that in the north and east of the country a war was raging? However, without making a show of it, Frank and Rolf were always armed. Rolf had always brought the wages at the month's end with his personal revolver concealed under his bush jacket. From halfway through the contract, Frank had kept a shotgun in his caravan and he later travelled with a 9-mm sub-machine gun in his car.



By now the 'problem of unemployed and unoccupied youth in the Tribal Trust Lands, who are creating a resource pool of potential terrorists' had started to worry a great number of men in the administration. Six innovators therefore met during April 1976, with the following objective:

To formulate a policy re African youth and to submit a complete report containing recommendations for a comprehensive youth

programme, which should be instituted in 'sensitive' and 'peaceful' areas [in anticipation of terrorist incursions].²

The document proposed an imposing structure. In the provincial offices there would be a provincial officer for youth, with one male and one female assistant provincial officer, and, at district level, a male and a female cadet/officer supervising field staff. It was suggested that 'the Provincial Officer should be of the calibre of the existing PCDOW and should have Assistant District Commissioner or Grade 6 status'. I appreciated the compliment about the 'calibre' but asked whether that compliment could take concrete form, i.e. that the post of PCDOW might be upgraded to ADC or Grade 6 status. The cheek of their double standards!

The objectives of the youth section, to be called the Young Citizen's Movement, were to be to

- divorce unoccupied youth from terrorist recruitment,
- instil in them a sense of patriotism and loyalty to the present government and to their own tribal structure,
- try and equip them with some skill/trade/craft which will assist them to become self-supporting,
- motivate the youth to become more involved with their own community's development and progress,
- aim at 100% involvement of unoccupied youth.

The YFC would continue as a separate movement. In still-peaceful situations, temporary residential camps would be established for the boys' groups. Girls would return to the care of their parents at night. Where CVs and PVs had already been established around a school, its facilities would be made available during the afternoons.

I was intrigued. I said that it would be interesting indeed if some 'market research' was conducted to find out what rural boys and girls who were not at school actually aspire to and are unhappy with. I did not say that the Women's Section had never found it necessary or even desirable 'to foster loyalty to the present government'. In fact, overt or veiled political objectives were never even mentioned at any of our officers' staff meetings. However, I did acknowledge this proposal as a more genuine effort 'to win hearts and minds' than government's propaganda. A pilot project was to be established in one of the wards of Mangwende TTL, but such a youth section, to the best of my knowledge, was never implemented.

² Minutes of the meeting held in the Mashonaland East Board Room on Thursday, 20 April 1976. Participants: Mr T. Thorpe, Provincial Commissioner, Matabeleland North; Mr L. Leach, Provincial Commissioner, Mashonaland East; Mr P. Jordaan, Provincial Agricultural Officer, Mashonaland East; Miss W. Wilson, Senior Community Development Officer (Women); Mr R. Dawson, District Commissioner Regional Authorities; Mr B. Johnson, Provincial Young Farmers' Clubs Officer.



I conducted another HEDs initial course at Domboshawa from 18 April to 14 May 1976. Although I was still course director, I no longer could, and no longer needed to, be present throughout these initial courses. The various trainers knew by now what was needed and I could sometimes brief and debrief them over the telephone. Two Women Advisers were pulled in to act as course co-ordinators and stayed with the trainees at all times. Our skills trainer, Miss Muvandi, was there at night also, as much of the needlework was done in the evenings. My role now was mainly to observe and evaluate the sample lessons that the trainees had to give and, alas, to write a course report. This still gave me the opportunity to get to know the participants. I attached great importance to this, which would lay the foundation for our later relationship in the field.

This HED particular course stands out in my memory in respect of one course participant: Mrs Suswe.

Mrs Suswe

Domboshawa:¹ The four-week Home Economics Demonstrators initial course was over. The thirty-one trainees, after receiving their certificates at the closing ceremony, had left, chatting excitedly as they boarded the bus that was taking them to town. For me, the anti-climax set in. I tidied up, packing equipment, materials, handouts and questionnaires into cardboard boxes gleaned from supermarkets. I would take them to the office, check the mail for urgent matters, go home, cook a special meal, give time to my children, give time to my husband, sleep. I longed to sleep.

My head worked furiously as I packed.

'This HED course is simply not good enough. Can we really expect the trainees to impart all the knowledge that we pack into those four weeks to the women in their home areas, considering the scanty back-up we are able to give them? The cookery and handicraft skills, yes. The other subjects, no! The course needs to be extended for a week. We need to change our teaching methods. Wyn Wilson will not agree. When we officers meet, she will ask Betty Mtero first. Betty will not agree. When WW and BM agree with each other, we others are expected to defer. They know best.'

I anticipated the scenario. I churned it over. Finally all was packed into my Renault 6, the slide projector occupying the front seat and lots of paraphernalia lying on the back seat and the floor.

Near the entrance to the centre I saw Mrs Suswe sitting on the ground, next to her travelling bag – legs outstretched in front of her, back upright, eyes focused on the middle distance.

Mrs Suswe had been very quiet during the course. Never commented or asked questions. A good adult educator gets everyone to participate, draws out the shy. I

¹ I wrote this in the 1980s.

had tried hard but I did not succeed. I observed her closely. Though she never spoke, I could see from her alert eyes that she was always with us. Her eyes would turn intently to whoever spoke, light up at times, look puzzled at others. They never clouded over with boredom or drowsiness. I decided to leave her alone, not to force her overt participation. The Women Adviser who stayed with the participants overnight said that she had asked many questions in the evening. When it was her turn to give a practical demonstration she was well prepared. She trembled with anxiety at first, then a sunny personality broke through and at times she could not forget her nerves.

I stopped my car. 'What are you still doing here? Aren't you going home? You'll miss the afternoon bus to Mudzi!'

Mrs Suswe explained that she was meant to be collected by a businessman from her home area, who had a car, together with an in-law, but no one had come. I offered to take her to the Harari bus terminus. Another complication in my life. I would not make it to the office. I would have to unpack all that stuff at home and repack it again on Monday.

Mrs Suswe managed to squeeze into the back seat, piling one box on top of another, so my rear window was obscured. She settled in, her folded arms resting on the travelling bag on her lap. I continued to rehearse my 'confrontation' with my boss in my head. 'This HED course just is not good enough...'

Mrs S. was silent. Suddenly I remembered my manners.

'How did you like the course?' I ventured by way of making conversation.

'The four weeks at Domboshawa were the best four weeks of my entire life!' she exclaimed, as if she had been waiting to say this ever since she got in the car. 'The best four weeks of your entire life?' I asked, startled. I stretched to catch sight of her in my rear-view mirror. She repeated slowly and emphatically, as if to savour every word: 'The best four weeks of my entire life!' Her eyes shone, her face was lit up with a radiant smile.

'What was so good about it?'

'All these years when I hoed the field with my baby on my back – thump, thump, thump – I said to myself, "This is all I am good for, hoeing the field and giving birth, hoeing the field and giving birth." On this course I learned that I can BE somebody!'

Searing tears shot into my eyes. I remembered a scene in Glen Carron Avenue. I am shining the floor with curving strokes. 'This is all I am good for – polishing floors, cooking meals, tending children!' I wanted to scream with every swish of the brush over the dark, gleaming wood. Instead, I willed myself to go numb.

'My heart was heavy when I swept the yard – swish, swish, swish,' Mrs Suswe went on, 'heavier than the child on my back. "This is all I am good for," I used to think.'

Sweeping the yard and tending children, sweeping the yard and tending children. Swish, swish, swish...

'At Domboshawa my heart learned to sing!'

Dull pain pervaded my head, throbbing temples. Sensations that had for years replaced repressed anger and resentment at the role 'nature' had assigned to me. Signs I did not recognize at the time for what they were.

'At Domboshawa my heart learned to sing,' Mrs Suswe repeated, in case I had not heard.

My mind flashed back to the Wedza road. It was the early days of my job as PCDOW. My mental horizon had expanded every day since I started this work. As my car climbed a low rise, my heart burst into song. Then my voice. I sang loudly all the way to Wedza – a new activity for me. I did not often sing, having been told since childhood that I had ‘no voice’, was utterly unmusical.

‘Being a mother and a wife and tilling the soil is good,’ I offered. ‘But it is not enough.’

‘You Europeans are lucky,’ Mrs Suswe cut in. ‘You are educated, your husbands and in-laws don’t try and keep you down. You are free!’

‘Oh no we aren’t,’ I said, gloomily amused. Then earnestly: ‘All over the world women have to fight to become free. Many of us allow our hearts to turn into a stone, trying so hard to be what others expect us to be. My mother did. I did. Doing the work I am doing now, my heart has learned to sing.’

Mrs Suswe was quiet. We both lost ourselves in our own thoughts. After a while I asked, ‘How are you going to use the knowledge you gained at the course when you get home?’ Mrs Suswe had made detailed plans. I added a few suggestions. Then I had to concentrate on the traffic. We were entering the township.

‘The women say you are working very hard to help us,’ Mrs Suswe said.

‘I am doing this work to set myself free,’ I said, truthfully. ‘I am doing this work to find out who I can be.’

At the long-distance-bus terminal, as I helped her get out of the car, two of Mrs Suswe’s male in-laws (*vatezvava*) miraculously emerged from the crowd. She greeted them with due ceremony, all solemn now, curtsied, then introduced us. She looked ‘all respectable married woman’, not looking her *vatezvava* in the eyes. That would have been brazen.

‘We were very proud of Mrs Suswe at Domboshawa,’ I said to the men. ‘She was the best student on the course!’

‘*Naika?* [Is that so?],’ said one of them, looking from me to her to me, disbelieving.

‘We expect great things from her,’ I continued, putting authority into my voice. ‘We expect her to teach other women everything she has learned on the course. She has the talent of being a great teacher.’

‘*Naika?*’ repeated the in-law.

‘She has talent,’ I repeated. I let that sink in. ‘Some of her teachers at the course will visit her in time, to find out how she is doing. We know that you men will support her. You have understanding. You want progress in your area,’ I said, thinking that a bit of blackmail would do no harm.

I put my body between them and my sister. ‘Never forget that your heart has learned to sing,’ I said very quietly. Then loudly, ‘*Mufambe zvakanaka* [travel safely], Mai Suswe.’

‘Never forget that your heart learned to sing!’ I said very quietly to myself as I drove towards my home, where, no doubt, I would be reminded that I had sorely neglected my duties as a housewife, mother and wife during the last four weeks and that now was the time to make good.

Mai Suswe did sterling voluntary work in her area during the difficult times of the war.

During June, I conducted three HED refresher courses (30 May–4 June, 6–11 June and 20–26 June). I based the course content on my last follow-up on the voluntary workers' level of activity in the field and the additional training needs they had brought to my attention. My training load was heavy, but Rolf and Yvonne were glad that I did not travel out so much for a while.

During the same month I was also able to send Women Adviser Nyakabau on a month's Red Cross course. She struggled forlornly in her PV, Nyamara, where, in her own words, 'women were no longer inclined to progress'. It gave her a break and, in my judgement, the knowledge she gained could only boost her confidence and benefit her village. As it turned out, providing first aid and medicines for minor ailments – which I had received from the Red Cross and sent to her – became one of her main activities.



Miss Wilson continued her own battle to upgrade the Women's Section. Dorienne and I were struggling to cover the three Mashonaland provinces adequately between us. The post in Matabeleland North was still vacant. Current incumbents of the provincial posts were aware of how poorly their salary scale compared with those of comparable posts within and without Internal Affairs. Furthermore, Miss Wilson and Alison Stewart had reached the top step of their respective salary scales.

When submitting the estimates for the 1976/77 financial year (The government's financial year ran from 1 July to 30 June), Wyn Wilson had put in a bid for the improvement of the PCDOs' salary scale and of her own, as well as for an eighth PCDO post (the post that had been forgotten when the Mashonaland provinces were divided) and for eight Assistant Provincial Officer posts. She still played her cards close to her chest, and this was not known to us officers or to my own PC.

In the meantime I continued my own struggle for an assistant. There was another setback. On 21 June, my PC received a letter from head office informing him that the transfer of the District Officer post from Marandellas to province that he had asked for could not be approved: 'It would appear that the need is for Miss Allan, because she has community development experience, and not for a DO's post.' That was, of course, true, but spiteful, I thought.



Local Government Awareness training had continued in the Gatooma, Hartley, Goromonzi and Marandellas districts. This year I had given Women Advisers a roneo'd questionnaire as a report format and thus got more useful feedback than for the previous year, including more quantitative data, and could also compare qualitative information received in respect of venues, council areas and districts. For example, I now had information on the categories of potentially influential women and men who participated, comments on which parts of the lessons were fully understood or not, which aspects women were most interested in, what problems were experienced, and what needs the councils could be asked to address. I will not give all of this detail here of course, but in this extract Chief Neuso presented us with an unexpected highlight:

At the meeting at Chief Neuso's *dare* (court) in Sanyati TTL, Mrs Chida recorded the following attendance: 76 women (including the chief's wife, two councillors' wives, the HED, three members of area or district women's club committees, one teacher), and 22 men (including Chief Neuso, one councillor, one headman designate, three kraal heads, one TTL authority chairman, two Extension Assistants).

She reported: 'Some of the women had attended the first council awareness training sessions in 1975. They were most interested in [the mechanics of] council elections and the work of council committees. They asked for more lessons on how council works and told the meeting [as they had done last year] that 'women want to have women councillors and want to be allowed to vote'.

At the end of Mr Chitsenga's lesson, the chief told the women about the next election dates for Neuso Council, which were imminent.³ He added: 'For the first time in Sanyati I will have a woman councillor in my council.' He then asked women to meet to nominate women candidates.

And it happened!

The women's club members of Chief Neuso's area met promptly and nominated three women: Mrs Machaka, Mrs E. Chiyengerere and Mrs B. Mbasera. The chief chose Mrs Mbasera.

And thus, shortly afterwards, the first woman councillor was appointed

³ The franchise qualifications stipulated in the warrant of Neuso Council were 'ratepayers within the council area'. Three councillors were to be elected. However, the warrant also provided for the appointment of six councillors. Section 7(1)(d) of the African Councils Act [Chapter 231] provided for the appointment of 'some' councillors, if this was stipulated in the warrant. I cannot remember who actually had the power to appoint. Chief Neuso probably prevailed on the DC as the Minister of Internal Affairs representative.

in my work area – as a direct result of the council awareness programme I had instituted!

Women Adviser Mukombiwa reported from Chesa, in Headman Mawanga's area in Chinamora TTL, of Goromonzi District:

Attendance: 16 women (including four kraal heads' wives) and 22 men (including three kraal heads and one headmaster). The Community Adviser helped with a lesson on government grants to councils, Women Adviser Guzha talked on 'women's clubs and councils' and I gave a talk on 'other women's organizations which could be helped'. The course was enjoyed by the group. Reasonable questions were asked. Only a few people came because others were guarding the crops against baboons. Baboons are a real, real problem in this area. Participants asked for such courses to come in August, because at this time the baboons are terrible.

Women said the following problems should be solved by the council:

- helping to protect crops by shooting baboons with council guns,
- providing a clinic with a maternity ward
- providing an ambulance service.



In the meantime Penny Ross carried on with her initial and refresher training of Development Workers and her fieldwork. Penny developed a more intimate knowledge of the communities she worked with than I did, partly because she was able to concentrate on only a few villages. In Mukumbura especially she developed a good working relationship with administrative and development staff and with security personnel. As regards personnel, 'Mukers' developed into a PV like no other that I experienced; Internal Affairs staff were permanently stationed there. In the PVs in Mashonaland East where we had Development Workers, there seemed to be a different Keep commander every time I visited. Mukumbura was in close proximity to the border and during the dry season was separated from Mozambique only by the sandy riverbed of the Mukumbura river, which dried out after the rains. These facts contributed to its unique character.

Penny recounted in 2011:

As happens in war, there were many anomalies. There was a track between the FRELIMO camp, sporting a cantina, situated over the border within easy sighting of the Keep, and of Mukumbura

village itself. When our guys needed some hooch, they would go over and shop at the cantina, and when their guys needed provisions, they would come over to our side to shop. Quite a camaraderie grew up. Everybody would happily greet each other. (The Development Workers told me all this.)

For my part, I can remember one occasion, when Allan Nichols, myself and the Special Branch guy climbed up into the crow's nest of the radio tower to have a sundowner, the FRELIMO guard whistled and waved to us, we waved back and we all got on with what we were doing. Even when the Selous Scouts came into camp for a rendezvous, this didn't stop the to-and-fro trading, so it was obviously common knowledge among the military. (I don't think Jim Latham [DC Mount Darwin] knew about it, though!) There were incursions into the village, nonetheless.

Barry Mulder, the camp commander, would go walk-about in the village at night, talking to the elders and gathering intelligence. I went with him one night and was impressed with his demeanour in front of the elders. Barry was a comic of note, having a 'magic' cow tail with which he would 'bless' every vehicle going out of camp to protect them against landmines, etc., and it was hard to take him seriously. With the villagers, though, he was a quiet, gentle man, showing great respect and understanding of their culture and speaking fluent Shona. He was a person the elders obviously respected as well, and he spent ages with them, squatting and chatting and sharing, all very much at their ease. It really showed up the calibre of the men who had joined Intaf years before the war escalated, who saw their jobs as their 'vocation' and who put everything into trying to make a difference.

The DWs in 'Mukers' worked particularly closely as a team with the health and agricultural assistants, and thus also received full support from those departments and never had any trouble furthering their projects. They set up a very effective and lucrative co-op there, and just about every woman I saw in my walk-about was involved in one project or another. Frequent shows were held, quite apart from the daily stalls selling homecraft and vegetable wares. Mango and paw-paw trees were growing in abundance.

The men, of course, were not as involved as the women! They directed their skills into making *kachasu*, and there were

several stills operating (amazing technology applied with the most diverse throwaway items!) and thriving!⁴ The DWs dared me to drink a mug of *kachasu* one day from one of the stills – I did, and thereafter could not walk straight for the next hour: they couldn't stop giggling. The flight home in a small plane I remember to this day. I don't think I've ever felt so sick!



On 23 April 1976, the Commission of Inquiry into Racial Discrimination presented its report to the President. It became public in June. While the war was proceeding and intensifying, 207 people and organizations, mostly of goodwill, gave oral evidence, while 252 submitted written memorandums. With the exception of the Centre Party, political parties were conspicuous by their absence.

The Commission stated in the preface to its report,

There can be no doubt that there are several matters which have given rise to feelings of resentment on the part of sections of the African, Asian and Coloured communities. These feelings result from the belief that they are unfairly discriminated against. The restraints placed upon them and the unjust treatment of which they complain, have made them feel rejected, inferior and ... 'merely second-class citizens'. If there is to be harmony in this land [and what greater prize could there be than that?] these matters must be set right at the earliest time.

The Commission concluded that the Land Tenure Act needed to be dismantled. It recommended that the division of the country into 'European Land' and 'African Land' be abolished and the country instead be divided into 'Private Land' and 'State Land'. In the former category anyone of any race should be able to purchase agricultural, industrial or residential land. 'State Land' would include National Parks, Forest Land and Tribal Trust Lands. By continuing the exclusion of other races from the TTLs, the social fabric and land tenure arrangements 'of the tribesmen' [still living largely according to customary law under the jurisdiction of their chiefs] would remain protected.

The Commission made many other recommendations in respect of the Land Tenure Act. Of importance within this context is that 'so far as urban commercial and industrial land is concerned, the time has come

⁴ *Kachasu* is a distilled highly alcoholic beverage. It usually contains additives to increase its potency, which might include ammonium nitrate fertilizer and other substances. Since it is highly dangerous to health, the manufacture of, trading in and possession of *kachasu* is illegal.

to make such land available to all races'. This is not the place to examine the Commission's recommendations in great detail. I will confine myself therefore to some general remarks on the legal status of African women and then the question of identity cards.

I thought that the submission by the YWCA on 'Certain Disabilities Suffered by African Women' was a brilliant strategy to draw attention to the inferior status of African women compared to that of their men. As they would have got nowhere doing that directly, they compared their legal status to that of European women, whose legal status was considerably better than theirs. The YWCA articulated women's grievances well – their minority status, the conditions to be met when they enter a civil marriage, the property rights of women within marriage, their inheritance rights, etc. – but would probably have not found a suitable or a sympathetic platform to voice their 'women's lib ideas', as many men dismissively called them at the time. Couching them in terms of the law not being applied equally to white and black women gave them entry to the Commission. By this move, their concerns got into print and reached a wide audience. The government had, at least, to take note.

At this time, the law required only African males to carry identity cards. However, this aspect of discrimination was soon to be rectified. Indeed, the introduction of compulsory identity cards for men and women of all races was already in the pipeline. I came to notice that African women warmly welcomed the introduction of ID cards for themselves. In customary law, with only minor modifications in statutory law, African women were still regarded as perpetual minors, passing from the guardianship exercised over them by their fathers to that exercised over them by their husbands upon marriage, and to that of a brother, or even a son, should they become divorced or widowed at a time that their father was already deceased.

Being issued with an identity card in their own name did not, of course, emancipate them but, nevertheless, unsophisticated urban and rural women saw their registration as an important step towards their emancipation. (Sophisticated women wanted considerably more.) In their eyes, a woman with her own ID card had become 'a person in her own right'. In practice, this meant that she could now collect a registered letter from the post office without having to be accompanied by a male who identified her to the counter clerk. She could now open a Post Office Savings Bank account and she could withdraw money from it unaided by a male. This greatly boosted her self-confidence.

Years later, when doing research into attitudes towards rights to land for women, I was to rediscover the positive emotional impact the legal requirement to possess an identity card had had on rural women.



During July and August 1976, the people of Mudzi District were required to move into CVs and PVs. Women Adviser Mary Chijaka had been appointed on 1 July. Within a fortnight of starting work she and her husband had to dismantle their home and move into Dendera PV. Lydia Psuura moved into Chiunye CV near Benson Mine on 1 August: it was to be her first of several moves. Bertha Chibisa moved into Nyakuchena PV in mid-August.

When I met them shortly after their move, they were quite despondent. Mrs Psuura and Mrs Chibisa had seen the fruits of their work being eroded for some time. They felt that it would be entirely destroyed with the move of people into the villages. They could not imagine how they could build it up again. Voluntary workers would no longer come forward. They feared that, in contrast to Development Workers, who could offer skills training, Women Advisers, who were still forbidden to do so, would be regarded as 'useless' by the people.

I reminded them to concentrate on the Two-Tone Plan as soon as they themselves had settled: They were to start by focusing their attention on the village they had moved into. Obviously they first needed to establish their own homes to the best standard that they could, and then their first community task would be to attend to environmental sanitation to prevent the outbreak of diseases. They should concentrate on fostering their relationship with former interest-group members and voluntary workers, at first 'simply' showing empathy and interest in how they were re-establishing their lives and offering encouragement. They should monitor the nutrition of young children, encourage the re-establishment of vegetable growing and, in time, the raising of chickens. Attention to actual and potential informal leaders of development would be important.

All this at first depended on home visits. If an interest group could be encouraged to re-form later, so much the better. Once they had a good appreciation of the situation in their own village and could see signs of it developing into a 'model village', they could begin to fan out into other villages.

Obviously they also needed to know what government extension workers were still around that they could liaise with, introduce (or re-introduce) themselves to all the traditional leaders in the village, and explain their work to successive Keep commanders.

After much planning and re-planning on my part, Miss Wilson and I paid a flying visit to several PVs in Mudzi and one in Mrewa District on 22 and 23 July 1976. We flew to Nyamande via Mtoko and there held discussions with both Development Workers and Keep staff. We circled Gozi only to get an overall impression but held discussions with Development Workers at Msau and met Chief Mkota and Keep staff. On our way back to Mtoko, where we stayed the night, we circled Morosi Keep and village.

The next day we flew first to Nyamande, where we also had discussions with Development Workers and Keep staff, and then carried on to Nyakasoro to meet Development Workers stationed there and those from Mutawatawa, who had been brought there by road. After meeting Chief Chitsungo and Keep staff we returned to Salisbury.

The VIP visits boosted the morale of the Development Workers whom we met. They felt affirmed and appreciated. It also gave Wyn Wilson a better insight into conditions in the operational areas of Mashonaland East. It was a pity that those villages without convenient airstrips were not visited. I had been keen for her to visit Mutawatawa and Nyamara in particular.



WGL continued offering courses reserved for women in 'sensitive areas'. They also held interesting courses for women's club members in the Salisbury townships, which our neglected township worker, Mrs Guzha, could encourage women to attend. WGL was looking for women and girls who would teach other women what they had learned. There was a 'traditional music' course, a 'craft-marketing' course, and an 'urban civics' course that dealt with electricity (how it works, its cost, its dangers, wiring a plug, reading the meter), with water (its cost, how to save water, reading the meter), sewage, the rent structure, budgeting, hire purchase and passports. For school-leaver girls there were basic knitting and sewing courses, both including demonstration techniques. WGL also continued to train judges for women's club shows - for example, one-week courses during which they learned how to judge crocheting work, or machine or hand sewing.



We may have been appreciated in the field - notable exceptions were DCs Latham in Mount Darwin and Mirams in Mrewa, who, for their own reasons, detested Penny Ross and me - but this appreciation found

no echo in concrete terms at head office, where Wyn Wilson continued her efforts to have the structure and salaries of the Section upgraded. She now started to involve Dorianne and myself. Having been asked to submit proposals, I put forward one in July 1976 for the restructuring of the Women's Section.

Proposed revised structure of the CD Section (Women)

The new structure/hierarchy outlined below proposes (a) the creation of additional posts to enable the section to cope with existing and anticipated new demands, and to give promotion opportunities for existing staff, plus (b) the revision of existing salary scales to enable the section to retain experienced staff and to recruit additional staff.

A. Community Development Officers' posts (line function)

1. Chief CDOW (existing SCOW's post upgraded; salary scale upgraded)
|
2. Deputy Chief CDOW (2 new posts; to be created)
|
3. Provincial CDOW (8 posts, existing; salary scale upgraded)
|
4. CD Officer W (8 new posts at provincial level; to be created)

B. Administrative Assistants' posts (support function)

At provincial level (8 new posts; to be created)

The proposed new structure will entail that:

1. The present post of Senior Community Development Officer's (Miss Wilson's post) be upgraded to Chief Community Development Officer (Women) – with an appropriate *new* salary scale, and that 2 Deputy Chief CDOW's posts be created with appropriate salary scales. One will be housed in Bulawayo and one in Salisbury.
2. Each Deputy Chief CDOW will assist the Chief CDOW by supervising the Provincial Officers in 4 Provinces, plus one of the two Training Officers responsible for the initial training of field staff (Fort Victoria and Salisbury). (I assume that the Training Officer's salary scale also needs revision.)
3. Each Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) – PCOW – will be assisted by:
 - (i) 1 Community Development Officer (Women) and
 - (ii) 1 Administrative Assistant.

Thus 8 posts for each of these two grades will have to be created at provincial level.

(Note that some Provincial CD Officers' posts are currently vacant. If they can't be filled the new CDOW would have to take over full provincial duties immediately.)

A new salary scale will have to be introduced for the Provincial CD Officer's post. It must have a higher entry grade and a higher ceiling than the current scale to:

- (a) attract mature women with a degree plus relevant experience in a related field, and
- (b) to retain existing experienced staff.

Obviously it will be higher than that for the new CDOW's post.

All current Provincial Officers should be put on to the new scale and thus get an immediate financial benefit.

C. Possibility for accelerated advancement

I also propose that a possibility for accelerated advancement within the salary scale be introduced – similar to that offered to officers in the Administrative Section; i.e. that points be awarded for years of service (the normal increment scheme) plus additional points for relevant qualifications attained in addition to the minimum qualifications of a degree in one of the social sciences.

These additional points should be awarded when officers pass relevant examinations – such as the Shona or Ndebele language examination and the Customary/Statute Law examination offered by Internal Affairs, the Certificate in Adult Education offered by the University of Rhodesia, or a certificate or higher qualification in social work.

Wyn Wilson involved Dorianne and me in several meetings with the higher echelons in Internal Affairs to negotiate the upgrading of our Section. I remember one conversation going something like this:

Male officer: 'The difficulty is: We don't know what to equate your position (as PCOW) with.'

CDOW: 'What about comparing our salary scale with that of another provincial officer, one who doesn't have as many field staff to supervise and does not need a degree as minimum qualification?' (They were all male and working largely with men.)

Male officer: 'But you are working with women!'

CDOW: 'What about comparing our position with that of Community Development Officers in the Ministry of Local Government?' (Salary scales provided.)

Male officer: 'The top jobs in that section are held by men.'

CDOW: 'What about comparing the scale of a *Provincial CD Officer (Women)* with that of a female *District Officer* in Internal Affairs?'

Male officer: 'The District Officer is part of the Administration.'

Eventually, on 9 July, we had an appointment with A.D.B. Yardley, the Secretary for Internal Affairs. Its outcome was inconclusive.

We CD Officers (Women) had become aware that Wyn Wilson was grudgingly respected, but not very much liked, by the men at head office. But surely, we asked ourselves, they could not be so petty as to allow their personal feelings to influence their perception of the justice of our case? I was also somewhat downhearted that the support of Bob Woollacott, who was firmly on our side, and that of Lionel Leach, as indicated opposite, did not carry more weight.



Field work continued. During August I made a visit to a hitherto unvisited PV in Mudzi. Newly appointed Women Adviser Mary Chijaka came to meet me there on her bicycle from her own village. We spent a normal working day together. We discussed how she had settled down in Dendera, what work she could do there after the turmoil of the move, and how I wanted her monthly reports to be written. She left during the late afternoon while I stayed the night.

The next afternoon astonishing news reached me in the form of a note in her own handwriting. Mrs Chijaka had been overcome by 'stomach pains' on her way home, had sought shelter at a nearby homestead, and had given birth to a baby girl! She rode home the following morning, on her bicycle, her new-born daughter on her back, and presented her to an astounded husband. I sent a message of congratulation, but – since the Section's policy required that a woman member of staff resign during pregnancy – I had no option but to add that she must resign immediately. I notified the district office and Miss Wilson on my return.



During August 1976, the Community Development Section (Women) celebrated the tenth anniversary of its coming into being with an exhibition of photographs, the publication of a booklet, and the production of a film depicting its work.¹

The exhibition of photographs entitled 'Challenge and Achievement' was staged at the Monomotapa Hotel on 18 August; later we took it to the Salisbury Show. Top government officials, the Mayor of Salisbury, and the national representatives of the women's and other voluntary organizations we worked with attended the opening, together with about 150 invited

¹ I have no recollection of it now, though I once wrote a critique of it; it seems to have been quite good. I have tried to locate the film in the National Archives of Zimbabwe, but it is not there.

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref: CG 76 x PER.3GEN/125/76
Office of the Provincial Commissioner
Mashonaland East

2nd August 1976

P.O. Box 8336, CAUSEWAY

To: The Secretary for Internal Affairs (Attention Mr Henson)¹

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: WOMEN

I am anxious to make even greater progress amongst the women in the tribal areas of this province, particularly those in the operational districts. Not only am I convinced that the quickest and most effective way of raising the African generally is through the women, but I also consider that we could make far greater use of the contacts in the women's field to obtain intelligence to help us in our efforts against the terrorist.

We cannot achieve these objectives unless we have a well-based and proficient section whose task it would be to make as much progress as possible amongst the tribal women of this country in as short a time as possible. How we have retained the loyalty, drive and dedication of our existing staff amazes me. The anomalous and invidious position these ladies work under was highlighted for me when I discovered that Miss Allan, the District Officer at Marandellas, is drawing a higher salary than Mrs Chenaux-Repond, the Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) for this province. I was also shocked to hear that we are seeking women like Mrs Chenaux-Repond on a salary scale of \$3072 to \$5685 whereas the Ministry of Local Government are offering CD posts to African women who will not work at provincial level, and do not need a university degree as minimum qualification, at a scale of \$2079 to \$7611 (see Annexure for details). [The provincial officer's scale in Ministry of Local Government was \$5685 to \$7932.]

I would like to see for this province the provision of an assistant for the PCDOW. The Public Services Board have already undertaken an inspection of this post and, as far as I can make out, have recommended that relief be provided for this hard-pressed official by way of a clerical assistant – to be found from the resources of this province. Your PER.3A/29 has a bearing on this. Regrettably, we have no spare clerical assistant post and even if we did I am not convinced that a clerical assistant is the sort of person needed to assist the PCDOW, always assuming that someone was available to train the incumbent.

With qualified assistance Mrs Chenaux-Repond could spend more time in the field, where there is not only a pressing need for more Women Advisers and Development Workers, but also for someone who could effectively co-ordinate the very wide ranges of women's activities – something which is lacking at present. In the operational areas she also needs to be in a position to give time to Internal Affairs staff manning the keeps, who often do not know the roles of the women field staff and the aims of the women's community development section. In this way we could make even greater progress amongst the women and at the same time have far closer contact with them. ...

I therefore put in a strong plea for greater stress on the role of women in our Ministry, more senior posts and better salaries for our Women Community Development Section, please.

L.G. Leach
PROVINCIAL COMMISSIONER
MASHONALAND EAST

¹ Mr G.L. Henson, by the way, had conducted the ceremony at which I acquired citizenship by naturalization on 16 December 1967, and had signed my citizenship certificate. He was at the time District Commissioner Salisbury.

guests. The Minister of Internal Affairs, B.H. Mussett, flanked by the Secretary for Internal Affairs, A.D.B. Yardley, gave a speech praising our work.

Among other things, the minister said:

The difficulties of an already difficult job have been magnified by the security situation throughout the country. The section's staff shows considerable ingenuity in finding alternative means to assist and encourage women in operational areas and to refuse to allow intimidation, threats of terrorist reprisals and communication difficulties to undermine their resolve to progress.

The security situation demands a radical increase in staff, both at field and supervisory level, in order to maintain levels of achievement and to rise to the urgent challenge facing this country.

His kind words were encouraging, but did not translate into action until 1978, and then only into a mediocre, somewhat insulting, travesty of our proposals.

Wyn Wilson and our Women Adviser Mrs Msindo followed, explaining how we worked and what we had achieved in the face of many difficulties. Mrs Msindo had been awarded a Badge of Honour in the 1975 Independence Honours.² She was the first Women Adviser to be so honoured. Regrettably I have found no record of her citation.

The provincial officers did not figure on the programme. However, I got up after Mrs Msindo had spoken and said the following:

Honourable Minister, Secretary for Internal Affairs, Mayor of Salisbury and – the gentlemen at the top table will forgive me – most important of all today: Miss Wilson.

I see a note of surprise on Miss Wilson's face, and indeed, this item is not listed on the official programme at all. However, on behalf of all officers of the CD Section (Women) I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words.

We officers would like to express our personal and very deep appreciation for what you, Miss Wilson, have done for the CDSW, and for every member of its staff, which now numbers about 200. This is quite a figure when one considers that you have been able to build up an organization in which every member feels a deep commitment to her work and an equally deep loyalty to

² The Badge of Honour was awarded for 'long service and devotion to duty in government, municipal or private service'. Shape: oval; metal: bronze; obverse: silver Zimbabwe bird on rectangular green background; reverse: plain; name, position.

every fellow member of staff. On the other hand, one might well say that 200 staff really only amount to 'a handful' when we consider that together we are trying to serve 1 ¼ million women ...

Miss Wilson, the officers of your Section would like to present you this very small token of our respect for what you have built up and of our affection for you ...

I had scribbled these words on the back of the programme. We had actually planned to make the presentation privately after the day's visitors had departed. However, I suddenly felt that 'these men' should witness it and took the liberty of interrupting the programme. The sentiments I expressed were heartfelt. Difficulties between me and Wyn Wilson erupted only later.

People then toured the exhibition. We had stationed a Women Adviser at each panel, who explained the pictures and answered questions, giving details about the projects and other information. Interestingly Louisa Nhavira, Women Adviser Chiota, told me afterwards that she had been approached by a representative of the YWCA, who had asked if we also worked towards the improvement of the legal status of African women. Educated women formed the bulk of the YWCA's membership at the time. Although couched in more sophisticated terms, much of what they said tallied with what the Women Advisers said to me.

Revolutionary thoughts like lobbying for changes in the law were not harboured by the Women's Section – other than that we strove to make rural women more confident and to speak up, expressing their needs and opinions even at public gatherings. This, indeed, they did increasingly. Even this was viewed with dismay by some chiefs and by some DCs. It earned me a rebuke at a DCs' conference – for allegedly 'messing up the tribal system'. Working publicly towards the improvement of the legal status of African women would hardly have been tolerated by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Besides, Wyn Wilson had a dictum: Keep your energy for battles you *can* win.

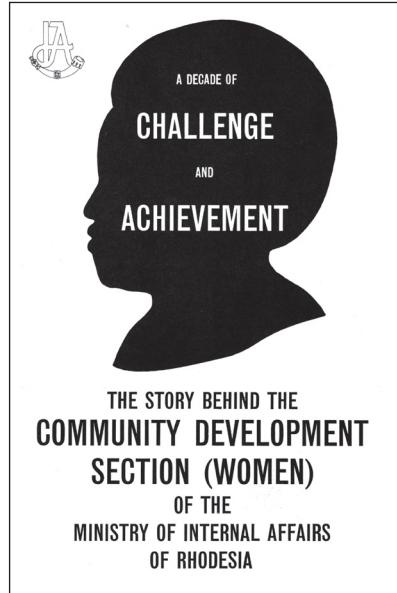
Nevertheless, Women Advisers did bring up some of the legal changes that women wanted – such as changes to inheritance laws – as is evidenced by their raising these issues at problem-solving sessions with the Provincial Commissioner during their refresher courses, and they planned to lobby for women's right to vote in council affairs.

Our exhibition – organized on a shoestring, with photographs that were far too small for public viewing – was amazingly well attended, even by the general public, during the days after the official opening. The exhibition was underpinned by the publication of *A Decade of*

Challenge and Achievement.³ It was compiled by Vivienne Brown, the former wife of pilot Ken Brown, and Wyn Wilson took a leading part in assembling it. Great care was taken that each and every Women Adviser in the country appeared in the publication in a photograph illustrating an aspect of our work. One panel showed the provincial officers at the time, though Adaire Robbins was not included. We wondered why. Later, we saw it as an early symptom of a deteriorating relationship between her and her boss. Wyn Wilson could be vindictive if she was peeved.

Alas, this portrait gallery was soon to become obsolete. A few months later Penny Ross (Head Office), Ruth Baker (Matabeleland South) and Brigitte de Chalain (Victoria) had resigned, and only Wyn Wilson, Betty Mtero (Training Officer), Alison Stewart (wManicaland), Adaire Robbins (Midlands), Dorianne Graham-Jolly and I (Mashonaland East) remained as full-time officers. Our Section had never had a full complement of provincial officers at any one time. Ruth Baker returned to Britain, where her children and grandchildren lived. Brigitte de Chalain emigrated; I can't remember what prompted her to leave. Penny Ross, a single parent, said:

Why did I leave? Two factors mainly: a) because Shelley [her daughter] was getting traumatized when I was in the field, believing she would hear my name on a security force communiqué, exacerbated by an attack on our home by terrors – we were living out at Glen Forest at the time, which was on their main route into town from Domboshawa. Fortunately, the security forces were on to them and chased them away, but it took its toll and brought the reality of the war a bit too close; and b) because I had become too close to the communities and their dilemma by then and grew to detest the paternalism and 'white supremacy' that was often too evident in the situation; and too frequently I found I had more respect for the African's than I had for the Rhodesian's 'cause'.



³ *A Decade of Challenge and Achievement: The Story Behind the Community Development Section (Women) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Rhodesia* (Salisbury: Spectrum, 1976).

IN 1970

the first Provincial Community Development Officers (Women) were appointed. Today there is a Provincial Officer from the section on the staff of each Provincial Commissioner of the Ministry and 148 Women Advisers throughout the country who are members of staff of District Commissioners.



Mrs. Penny Ross, Head Office.



*Mrs. Ruth Baker,
Matabeleland South.*



Miss Brigitte de Chalaín, Victoria.

The Community Development Section (Women) is headed by the Senior Community Development Officer (Women) who formulates policy. Miss Wilson still holds this position.



Mrs. Alison Stewart, Manicaland.



*Mrs. Maia Chenaus-Repond,
Mashonaland East.*



*Mrs. Dorianne Graham-Jolly,
Mashonaland West.*

The provincial officers in the *Challenge and Achievement* booklet

Penny took on the post of public relations officer for the City of Salisbury, a job she did brilliantly from a little stand-alone office along Second Street, arranging, among other things, another Jacaranda Festival in the middle of war time. Alison Stewart was due for retirement in about two years' time. She remained, but did not travel out much anymore. To give Matabeleland some support, Alison Watson was re-employed some time later working mornings only and not travelling either. (I never discovered how she managed a 'mornings only' arrangement.) Thus, from now on, only Dorianne and I travelled out into the field.

The *Challenge and Achievement* booklet has remained the main testimony to the work of the Women's Section to this day. Some years after independence, it received praise from an unexpected source. By then I was employed in a different ministry and had an office in the Makombe complex of new, prefabricated buildings along Herbert Chitepo (previously Rhodes) Avenue, which later became 'infamous' for its dilapidated state, milling crowds, and long queues on account of the passport office being housed there. The newly formed Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs was also housed in the Makombe building. One day, as I walked along the corridors, I noticed an almighty mess. Women's Affairs was clearing out its files and had thrown redundant papers into the corridor, to be taken away for shredding or into dustbins.⁴

A pile of the *Challenge and Achievement* booklets had been tossed on to the floor. I picked them up and took them home. About another two years later, the Minister of Women's Affairs, Joice Mujuru, who then still used her *chimurenga* name, Teurai Ropa (Spill Blood), phoned me personally. She said she would like to interview me for an assignment she had to complete for her university studies. (She was studying for a Certificate in Adult Education.) I invited her to lunch. She arrived with Betty Mtero, who, I found out, was rising high in the ranks of ZANU(PF).

We had a pleasant time together; Joice Mujuru was certainly neither aloof nor arrogant. After we had talked informally over lunch and had our more formal interview, I presented her with the booklet. She was delighted. 'So full of information; this is exactly what I need for my assignment!' she exclaimed. I could not help telling her that I had retrieved it from the 'colonial stuff' the new civil servants in her post-independence ministry had cleared out and destroyed. 'But we need to honour our history,' she said.

Indeed. When I showed the booklet to colleagues after independence, many a young black woman expressed utter surprise that such work had

⁴ This possibly partly explains why there are no records of Miss Wilson's work in the National Archives today.

been undertaken during colonial times, and even that women's clubs had existed previously.

On 29 September I was given the chance to speak to ten Keep commanders assembled at Mudzi district station about the goals that the Women's Section was trying to achieve in the PVs and CVs. Pressure of work and dependence on the DC's transport or the ADF plane had often left me with little time to explain this to them in their Keeps. I could usually only speak to those commanders that were stationed in Keeps where we had staff – and in the evenings when I stayed the night. In addition, they changed frequently in most villages.

Those present at the talk said that they had never even seen a Women Adviser. Their responses were mixed. Some were pleased to hear that development inputs were being made into PVs; some appeared to be interested only in 'the war being won as quickly as possible'. I had asked for sufficient copies of the booklet to be issued at least to the Keeps in which Women Advisers or Development Workers were stationed, preferably to all of them. In the same letter to Wyn Wilson I asked, once again, for her to issue an official job description for Development Workers, which I could distribute. None existed to date.



During July, a friend of mine from high-school days, Lucia Graf, wrote that she was visiting South-West Africa (now Namibia) and South Africa with a group of mineralogists from the University of Basel and that she would like to visit me in Rhodesia after the tour. Lucia had attained a doctorate in botany at Basel, had later worked as a research fellow at the University of Bristol, and was now back in Switzerland, working at the at the Laboratoire de Biochimie at the University of Neuchâtel, both as a researcher and lecturer.

I was delighted. No Swiss friend had ever visited me in Rhodesia and I felt particularly close to Lucia. I badly wanted to take her with me on one of my field visits. None of my Rhodesian acquaintances, even friends, outside the ministry had ever been more than marginally interested in my work. Certainly none would have travelled with me. By this time I also already felt very isolated within the ministry. Lucia knew, of course, that a civil war was taking place and had some trepidations. 'I will not take you anywhere dangerous,' I assured her.

I sought permission for Dr Graf to travel with me to a Protected Village. I argued that, in view of the negative publicity these were getting overseas, it would be good for her to see conditions in a PV first-hand. The

DC Mudzi (Charles Collett) was most likely to give me permission and he did, indeed, agree. I cannot remember what the PC said, or whether, in fact, I ever asked him. Most likely, in view of our poor relationship, I did not ask the DC Mrewa (Dave Mirams); he would get the names of the passengers on the Cessna from the pilot by radio when we were about to overfly his district. I booked us on to the ADF plane going to Mudzi and Mrewa (by-passing Mrewa itself), putting in my requests for the specific places I wanted to go to.

I had always referred to Lucia as 'Dr Graf'; I never said that she was a medical doctor or mentioned that she was a woman. At one of the airstrips DC Collett had practically laid out a red carpet. Some of his officers and guards greeted us at the plane. I remember Charles's face when he saw three women disembarking. A woman pilot, a woman doctor and myself. He had wanted to show Dr Graf a clinic but realized swiftly that she was not a medical doctor. Luckily he had a wicked sense of humour himself and laughed at this joke against his own assumptions.

Lucia herself shared the following memory of this trip:

I arrived in Salisbury in the afternoon, by plane, and at supper you announced that we would have to be at a small airport [Mount Hampden] next morning at 6.00a.m. for an excursion, so to speak. Once there, a woman pilot [Laurie Graham], who had a pistol on her belt, took charge of us. She was flying very low, there were many air pockets, and I got horribly sick. The pilot apologized, saying she had to fly below the enemy radar. I only gradually realized what she meant by 'enemy'.

After a while we landed in the middle of nowhere – in 'the bush', I learned later, this type of landscape was called. We had to wait for two women you needed to talk to, and in the meantime we were meant to eat the sandwiches you had brought – but not before the lady pilot had said to me that 'should terrorists arrive unexpectedly', she would first shoot us and then herself. I had longed to be on firm ground – now all I wanted was to be in the air again. I wasn't hungry either!

One of the women I needed to talk to was Mary Chijaka, who had given birth to her baby in such unusual circumstances so soon after her appointment. She had walked the three kilometres from Dendera PV, where she was living, to Kotwa airstrip, her child on her back. We discussed her pregnancy, the baby's health, her husband's reaction to the birth, and her plans for the future. She maintained steadfastly that she had not known that she was pregnant, that she had always had irregular periods but had had slight bleeds more regularly during her unsuspected pregnancy.

Always a slim woman, she had gained very little weight. There was certainly nothing in her appearance to make Betty Mtero, who had been in charge of her initial training and seen her daily, suspect. I had noticed no signs when I visited her during her field placement in Sanyati, on 'the other side of the world' from Dendera. What's more, I had not even suspected that she was pregnant on the day the baby had been born!

Wyn Wilson, Betty Mtero and I decided to believe her. She said she was hoping to be reappointed as soon as possible. In the meantime, she volunteered to continue to encourage her fellow women in the PV, which she had just moved into herself, to make the best of their situation. We decided that bearing a child had not been a ploy to get out of her job in an operational area. Any Women Adviser could have used a pregnancy to retire gracefully from their dangerous situation as government workers. None of them did. Mrs Chijaka applied for reinstatement on 15 February 1977, meeting me at Marembe PV. She was reappointed and did sterling work.

At Nyamande PV we first paid a courtesy call on Chief Chikwizo. The chief himself was absent, but we had a long talk with his wife. Her husband had been installed after my 1974 chiefs' wives course, so she had not had the benefit of that (or any other) course. Mrs Chikwizo was old, fairly frail and shy. The main problem faced by Nyamande PV, she told us, was the absence of a clinic. She herself had visibly infected eyes but said that the clinic was 'too far away for the chief to take me there'. Discussing the matter later with the ADC, I learned that a small unoccupied building could be made available by Internal Affairs for use as a dispensary, and I suggested that two women be selected to go for Red Cross training.



Women Adviser Mary Chijaka's PV home

The chief's homestead, comprising a collection of pole-and-daga huts, looked much like that of any other villager's. Of special interest to Lucia were the granaries, which were 'woven' from long, thin, flexible branches and looked like huge baskets. Like Mrs Chikwizo, Lucia and I sat on the ground, on a cloth spread out for us on the bare, baked earth. Lucia, dressed like me in a long skirt, fitted herself into the setting perfectly, asking the old lady gentle questions about her life and expressing sympathy for her poor health.

Although Chief Chikwizo and his wife had lived at Nyamande since the PV was built – first at the end of the airstrip, now in close proximity of the Keep – neither had shown any overt interest in the Development Workers' work or the activities of either the women's or the girls' group at Nyamande. I spent considerable time explaining the workers' actual and potential activities to her and encouraging her to visit. 'My eyes ...,' she said, shaking her head. We then visited the literacy class taught by Development Worker Synodia Nyamana. A small classroom had been constructed by the community, and the students, which included two teenage boys, were progressing well. Synodia had also planted a vegetable garden with the class – but the first crop had been harvested by goats!

Apart from the literacy class, work in this area was not going that well. The village women were still largely unresponsive to the Development Worker's suggestions for activities, pleading poverty. I was curious to find out why, despite the women's reluctance to engage themselves, a few always made a point of coming to greet me when I visited. The only answer I received from them was that 'it is good manners to welcome a visitor'. Perhaps sheer curiosity made them do it; more likely, my trustworthiness



Chief Chikwizo's wife's basket-like granaries

was still being scrutinized. Are there any potential leaders among the women who come to greet me? I wondered. Are there women who want to form a club, but are too afraid to do so because the 'comrades' discourage women's clubs? Local guerrilla leaders differed in their policies, so it was not only the acceptability or enthusiasm of specific Development Workers



**Development Worker Synodia Nyamana
with her literacy class in Nyamande PV**

or Women Advisers that determined whether or not interest groups were formed. Some local leaders tolerated only church gatherings on Sundays – somewhat strange, I thought, for alleged communists.

A girls' group had been formed, however, and was busy knitting babies' garments from wool, donated from my meagre provincial funds and shipped to them by 'air freight'. Despite the hot climate, they had not wanted *shinda* (cotton yarn): 'proper' babies' clothes are made from wool, not cotton, they said. Half a dozen girls (far too young to join the group) sat at its periphery, practising knitting with scraps of wool, using 'needles' fashioned from the hard stalks of thatching grass. The girls' group handed me \$5.00 to buy day-old chicks for them so that they could start a chicken project. I had no doubt that the pilots would oblige by flying them in, but the logistics of buying the chicks at that logistically crucial time, and my possibly having to care for them in my office before their safe dispatch, caused me some anxiety. However, they were bought and they arrived, chirping happily.

I left Development Worker Annah Mugumisi with some specific tasks to be undertaken by the 29 September staff meeting: 1) visit Mrs Mbambe and Mrs Kamupita; 2) ask their advice about what women would like to learn, and how to start classes; 3) list the names of women who had been to Domboshawa and Old Umtali Mission with my look-and-learn visit; 4) list the names of women who had been in a club or other group before; 5) list the names of children with marasmus or kwashiorkor. It seemed to me that we had a chance of forming at least one women's group if we could enlist the co-operation of women who had been with me on the 'pre-PV' motivational tour.

Lucia and I spent the night Mudzi, probably at the new training centre, which was still without electricity. I had brought food with me, which we cooked on the wood stove. We chatted by candlelight (as I have said,

I always had a candle in my basket) lying on our creaking Springmaster beds, but soon fell asleep. I awoke feeling happy that a friend had taken interest in my work.

Next morning an escort took us to the airstrip to be picked up by the ADF plane and dropped off in Nyakasoro PV. Lucia recounted:

During our long wait at Mudzi airstrip, our military escort carried out a check for landmines that might have been planted overnight. We had to take a seat in the front cabin – they were jeeps with a short wheelbase. The driver was white, the other members of the escort team were black. They sat at the back. The driver gave us cotton wool to stuff into our ears so that our eardrums would not burst so easily if we hit a mine. But really, in the armoured cabin, we would be fairly safe.

‘What would happen to the men at the back?’ I asked.

‘Well, they would not have much of a chance.’

Once again I swallowed dry. Maybe he noticed, because he toned down his remark with, ‘The vehicle is mine-protected, but they would be flung out.’

‘Why do we have to come with you in the vehicle?’ I ventured.

‘Because, if you remain standing alone at the edge of the airstrip you’ll be totally unprotected. In this bush war, the enemy is everywhere and mostly invisible. We just do not have the manpower to protect you; you are safest with us.’

I saw his point.

Next we landed near a Protected Village. We had to pass between two lines of armed men, their machine guns luckily pointing upwards, who escorted us to the village. There I learned that the women had just had lessons on knitting babies’ woollies. I thought to myself, ‘They’d better teach them to shoot!’ You, Maia, had disappeared somewhere. I had to hang around for some time and wanted to stroll towards the small lake that I could see across a fence. A soldier, white, implored me not to do so as he was responsible for me. I was awestruck.

At Nyakasoro PV (Mrewa) we were greeted by Development Workers Eugenia Machiridza and Grace Nhumba. The women’s club, flourishing by now, had decided to organize a show. There being no one else to do it, I had agreed to judge all the articles in all the sections – sewing, knitting, crocheting, cooking, baking, peanut butter, earthenware pots; everything except sadza. I would not have dared to judge the sadza, as, not being knowledgeable enough, I could easily have incurred the wrath of husbands for being unfair. Cold lumps of it, presented on an enamel

plate, had to be cut in half and examined for texture and taste. Alas, sadza always remained just sadza to me! The articles to be judged were already set out in a big room when we arrived. I told the women leaders that Mrs Graf had come to help me judge the show articles, and they were much pleased to have a visitor.

Lucia, like me, was a smoker. I had told her that I never, ever, smoked in the presence of villagers, and certainly not in the presence of a chief. I had omitted the courtesy call to the chief. Chief Chitsungu, who resided in the village, had never given me and the Development Workers any particular moral support. Today he apparently changed his mind. Lucia and I were busy judging the articles (and smoking) when the door opened and the chief made a grand entrance, dressed in full regalia – in his robe, his brass half-moon insignia of office decorating his chest, his helmet and his staff. He was followed by his wife, dressed for an official function, in court shoes, her outfit topped by a shop-bought hat. As they entered, Lucia and I discretely let our cigarettes drop out of the window. I hoped the chief's sense of smell was not too good. Formal courtesies completed, the chief and his wife took a great interest in every article on show. The chief asked our opinion about the standard of 'his' women's work. I deferred to 'our experienced visiting judge', who praised it greatly.

We had to interrupt our judging work at the chief's insistence and inspect the big vegetable garden for which he had allocated land, and in which each household had been given beds according to the family's size, with the women and children tending them. The vegetable garden was indeed impressive. At some stage the chief invited us both for lunch, and his wife



Lucia Graf with Chief Chitsungu and his wife in the village vegetable garden, Nyakosoro PV

left to oversee the cooking. We then toured the entire village with the chief. At one home, by way of making conversation, I admired the two clay pots that were set on three stones on the fire, including a small pot containing only water, gently bubbling away. The chief simply took the pot off the fire, bare handed, poured out the water and held it out towards me as a gift. I was horrified and wanted to refuse it. 'No, no,' he assured me. 'This mother would love to give it to you!' What could the poor woman do but smile and nod? The chief appropriated two more pots in this manner in two further households, a second one for me and one for 'our visitor from far away', all of them well-seasoned and blackened from much use on wood fires. I could now protest with conviction that more would not be allowed in my luggage by the pilot and that I was assembling too much weight for the plane to rise into the air! The two pots thus collected still stand on our mantelpiece over the fireplace. Occasionally I have used them in the oven and then served traditional food in them. I have a further, much larger one, a *hari* (water pot), given to me by Women Adviser Dinah Nyakabau when she heard the story. I cherish that finely crafted water pot, not only because of its workmanship but because it had been much used by her, before that gruelling incident ...

We proceeded to the chief's home, where, while we were sitting on a reed mat, so much food was pressed on us that we both nearly burst. Lucia comported herself perfectly, not indicating that she had some reservations about hygiene and cheerfully eating with her hands, copying our hosts in how to roll the sadza. Luke-warm bottles of fizzy drinks were duly offered – bright-green cream soda and bright-purple cherry plum, both known to be without any natural ingredients, other than plenty of sugar. I tried to take off their caps in the African fashion, using one cap to lever off the other, but fumbled. The chief swiftly took the bottles out of my hands and opened them with his yellow, stubby teeth, which, as we had noticed on our tour, were rather smelly. I silently gave full praise to Lucia, whose horror did not show on her face and who discreetly wiped the top of her bottle on her skirt.

We returned to the hall to finish our task by writing out 'tickets' marked '1st prize', '2nd prize', '3rd prize' and 'highly commended'. I had brought a stapler in my office briefcase – a stiff, rectangular 'pilot's case' – and we stapled the tickets to the articles. We stuck little cleft sticks with the indication of the prize into the appropriate pots of peanut butter. I asked the chief's wife to do us the honour of judging the sadza.

In December I wrote to Lucia:

How did your pot from Nyakosoro survive the journey back to Switzerland? [She still has it to this day.] I have been back to

the PV since our journey there, spending a whole day and the next morning, and staying the night. I hope to have finally laid to rest the leadership struggle between the chief's wife and the Development Worker, which had in the meantime developed to its apex.

I took a Women Adviser with me. We spent the whole day with the village women, discussing club management, explaining the role of a committee, how it should work, the role of chairwoman, secretary, treasurer, and how to conduct open elections and 'secret ballots'. In view of the chief's wife's sensitivity, we had also talked about the difference between a chairwoman, subject to election annually, and a president, a post reserved for a very important person, if there were any in the area, to be consulted in respect of very important issues and usually appointed for long periods. The chief's wife was made 'president for life' by acclaim.

In the morning we held elections. They had to be secret to avoid repercussions. Thus, to elect the chairwoman, for whom we still had two nominations, we put two pots into a hut, guarded by the Women Adviser, each decorated with the *dhuku* (headscarf) of the relevant nominee. I made the women line up and, before they entered the hut one by one, I gave each one small stick to place into the pot of her preferred candidate. Stick-counting was done by the chief's wife, now 'president', in full view of everybody. It fell to her to announce the woman with the most sticks in her pot duly elected – for one year, she stressed. The process was repeated for vice-chair, secretary, vice-secretary and treasurer, where there was more than one nominee. By the time we came to the two ordinary committee members, assembled women suggested that these could now be elected by acclaim.

The Development Worker, from now on, has to be formally invited by the committee to attend any meeting or to assist with any teaching. Thus both antagonists are out of the power game.

I would also like to mention that the young woman who was elected secretary has only recently graduated from the Nyakasoro literacy class!⁵ The person who was chosen as treasurer is an elderly widow. I noticed here and elsewhere that widows and divorcees are preferred for this post, because 'there will be no husband who can tempt her, or force her, to "lend" him club money.'

⁵ She had been semi-literate, having had to leave school after Grade 3.

The evening of the first day, the chief invited me for supper. I declined – but promised to come for lunch next time – as I wanted to spend time with the Keep staff, to enlighten them about what we are doing. I so often spend evenings in PVs like this, trying to explain that the significance our work goes beyond the learning of domestic skills, that we are trying to bring a semblance of normality into the lives of women and children ‘behind the wires’. The situation in this Keep is actually a bit delicate, as the chief apparently refuses to co-operate in any way with Keep staff and with the soldiers who so often pass through, sometimes spending a few nights there, but he ‘has apparently adopted me’. This has raised suspicion not only in the minds of Keep staff here but also in the DC Mrewa’s office – even more so since I refuse to have any Internal Affairs (Security) Assistants present at our meetings, cramping our style.

Before retiring to meet the Keep staff and soldiers, I spent an hour with the Literacy Teacher and the Development Worker under the stars. The night was inspiringly beautiful and seemed so peaceful. But once a flare rose into the sky at the horizon to the north-east, making us fall silent as the Keep radio burst into life. A neighbouring village thought it was being attacked. Fortunately no attack took place.

We flew to a strongly fortified Protected Village, in the east, near the Mozambique border. Philippa Mukonyora and Marjorie Munuwa – the Development Workers at Msau/Kondo PV – were fairly new, having been appointed in May, so we spent quite some time discussing how they had made themselves acceptable to the villagers and the possibilities for engaging women and girls in organized activities. We talked about their own families too, of course, and the news they had from home. Philippa was a mature woman, a widow with six children. Relatives were looking after them. She was glad to have found employment and to be able to send them money for their school fees.

The women at Msau/Kondo were bitterly poor. However, there was potential among the few trained women. A grandmother had wanted to sell me a heavily beaded front apron, obviously very old, the kind that had been worn in this area before colonization. I asked for its history and discovered that women actually still had calabashes and other articles decorated with beadwork in their homes. I asked them if they still had the skills to make such beaded articles, thinking that I might be able to sell them in Salisbury to raise funds for the women’s group. They told me that they used to buy the tiny glass beads in Mozambique, but that

was no longer possible. I knew that none were available in Salisbury, and because of foreign currency restrictions I could not send money overseas to buy them. Then I wondered, would family and friends in Switzerland donate some?

For our flight home we had, again, to wait endlessly at an airstrip. I enjoyed the peace and rest at the edge of the airstrip, gazing into the surrounding woodlands. A jeep first undertook a 'mine sweep'. However, even I began to feel a bit uneasy by the time the plane was over an hour late. Eventually it appeared as a small dot on the horizon. Laurie Graham landed, gathered us up, and deposited us safely at Mount Hampden just before nightfall.

Lucia was tactfully reticent during the remainder of her stay with us about the potential dangers that had understandably scared her. She told my family only about the development work she had seen. Barely three weeks after we had waited 'endlessly' at the edge of the red/brown gravel strip near Msau Keep, 'in the middle of the bush', waiting for the Cessna, the following report appeared in the *Rhodesia Herald*:

Boy Survives Elephant Attack

Elephants have trampled a tribeswoman to death and badly injured a nine-year-old boy in the Makota Tribal Trust Land near the Mozambique border.

The boy, Michael, was found at the scene the day after the attack, being comforted by his aged grandfather. He had been picked up by an elephant and hurled against a tree. They were discovered by chance by a Police Support Unit patrol. Michael is now in Mtoko Government Hospital suffering from chest and face injuries. A police spokesman said the attack occurred near the Msau Keep, north of Mtoko.

The boy and three women disturbed four elephants. One woman, Rhoda, was trampled to death. The other two women ran off and notified Michael's aged grandfather, who found the boy.

Michael was taken to a nearby airstrip from where a Police Reserve Air Wing plane took him to Mtoko. His grandfather, reluctant at first because he had never flown, went with him. The boy's condition is satisfactory.

Perhaps we had been in dangerous territory after all ...



Back from our field trip I had to help to mount and man the 'Challenge and Achievement' exhibition at the Salisbury Show. A number of Women Advisers were also stationed at the exhibits.⁶ At lunchtime there was a competition of drum-majorette routines (a first in Salisbury), which many urban girls' high schools, black and white, had entered. As my daughter Sue was leading the Mabelreign Girls High squad, Lucia, Caroline, Yvonne and I went to watch, together with the Women Advisers manning our stand. Long before the competition results were announced the Women Advisers declared that Sue's squad was clearly the best – and, indeed, it won the competition!



On 21 September 1976, we (Miss Wilson, Penny Ross, Alison Stewart, Betty Mtero, Brigitte de Chalain, Adaire Robbins, Dorianne Graham-Jolly and I) were flown to Mukumbura for a field visit. In my mind I filed the visit to 'Mukers' as 'the farewell to Penny', but Penny said this:

I don't recall at all the official 'farewell' at Mukers! I guess I would have already taken my farewells of the community and the staff in my own way, and I was feeling pretty sad about it, so a field visit where Wyn's focus was simply showing off the achievements at Mukers would not have been an event that stuck in my mind.

As my time in the Section passed, and as I grew closer to the Development Workers, Wyn and I progressively clashed and she became very averse to taking any suggestions from me about what could benefit the PVs.

It was obvious from the ease with which Penny mingled with people that she had been thoroughly accepted by the community. The Development Workers and local leaders showed us 'VIPs' their projects, and local leaders gave us their history. I remember the pre-school best. Towards the end of the afternoon the drummers moved in. We left the people dancing under the corrugated-iron roof shelter erected by the administration, a baobab tree nearby.

The visit to Mukumbura was followed by a two-day staff meeting for the provincial officers of the Women's Section on 22 and 23 September. Among other issues, we discussed the 'Ministers' Wives' Course'. The Smith government had appointed chiefs as ministers and black MPs as

⁶ From Mashonaland East: N. Chitekwe (Mtoko), J. Chirimuta (Mrewa), M. Chitumba (Wedza), R. Chivanga (Goromonzi), R. Guzha (Seke Township).

Ministers' Wives' Course

Monday, 27 September Mrs M. Chenaux-Repond

- 09.00 Introductions and discussion of course programme
Noting of additional requirements of Ministers' Wives
Use of hotel rooms
Personal hygiene in a hotel setting (Mrs B. Mtero)
- 10.00 Tea etiquette, how to serve tea, how to hand around accompanying food
Preparation for Lunch: table manners, bread rolls, sipping drinks
Setting a table (officers to bring props). Each to give a demonstration.
- 12.30 Lunch (Residents' Dining Room, Ambassador Hotel)
- 14.00 Visits: Furniture Store
Appliances Store view electric fridges and stoves, gas fridges and stoves, paraffin fridges and stoves
- 17.10 Fashion Demonstration (Venue: Sanders's 'Bird Cage')
Clothing for all occasions
Tea and sandwiches served

Tuesday, 28 September (Mrs D. Graham-Jolly)

- 10.00 Preparing and serving buffet meals
- 14.00 Flower Arranging
Dinner (at the hotel)

Wednesday, 29 September (Mrs M. Chenaux-Repond)

- 08.30 General Behaviour (Miss Wilson)
- 10.00 Tea (set up in residents' lounge)
Making conversation (Miss Wilson)
Reading (Mrs Chenaux-Repond)
- 13.00 Lunch (Residents' Dining Room)
- 14.00 Additional Requirements
- 17.00 Film Show
Dinner

deputy ministers earlier in the year.⁷ A grooming course for their wives had been planned by Miss Wilson for June, but it was postponed to 27-29

⁷ Ministers and Deputy Ministers appointed on 28 April 1976: Chief J.S. Chirau (aged 59), Minister of Development, Mashonaland West and Central; Senator Chief; President of Council of Chiefs since 1973. Chief K. Ndiweni (aged 59), Minister of Development, Matabeleland North and South; Senator Chief; Deputy President of Council of Chiefs. Chief T.C. Mangwende (aged 41), Minister of Development, Mashonaland East and Manicaland; Senator Chief, Member of Council of Chiefs. Chief Z. Charumbira (aged 40), Senator Chief; Member of Council of Chiefs. Fani Mlingo (aged 49), Deputy Minister, elected MP 1974. Zephaniah Bafanah (aged 58), Deputy Minister, elected MP 1974. Aaron Mungate (aged 54), Deputy Minister, elected MP 1970.

September. She had drawn up the programme based on training requests that she had received. In view of Penny Ross's imminent departure, some training tasks were re-assigned at the staff meeting. The course was held at the Ambassador Hotel, the main venue being its residents' lounge. Mesdames Chirau, Ndiweni, Mangwende, Charumbira (wives of minister chiefs), Mhlingo, Mungate and Bafanah (wives of deputy ministers) had been invited as participants.

While we were at Mukumbura, then ensconced in a staff meeting, and then with the ministers' and deputy ministers' wives, our Prime Minister went to watch a rugby match in South Africa.⁸ The very next day, on 24 September 1976, Ian Smith announced 'majority rule in two years' in a historic 'address to the nation' over the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation. The following day, the *Rhodesia Herald* reported:

The government has accepted the proposals put forward by the US Secretary of State, Dr Kissinger, for majority rule in Rhodesia in two years.

An interim government is to be established as soon as possible to work out a new constitution for Rhodesia within this period.

When the necessary preliminaries have been carried out, sanctions will be lifted and there will be an end to terrorism, the Prime Minister, Mr Ian Smith, said in his address to the nation last night.

The acceptance of the proposals is conditional on the dropping of sanctions and the cessation of terrorism, he said.

Smith had come under heavy pressure from South Africa, which in turn was under pressure from the USA. Kissinger leaned on Vorster and offered him concessions on American anti-apartheid policy. Vorster leaned on Smith. The Rhodesian army had not been defeated by the guerrilla army. The two armies fought each other within a wider international context. The international events and pressures on South Africa and Rhodesia are too complex to examine here and were certainly not fully understood at the time by ordinary Rhodesians. Vorster decided to withdraw South Africa's support for Rhodesia, which forced Ian Smith, ever the politician, to capitulate. Although Smith's decision had a demoralizing effect on the army, white citizens, on the whole, remained loyal to him.

I attended several meetings at which DCs informed the rural people of government's decision to grant majority rule within two years. Whatever their personal feelings may have been – which some vented freely as we

⁸ From time to time, Ian Smith went to watch a rugby match in South Africa. However, the more important business usually conducted during these 'informal visits' were confidential talks with the South African Prime Minister, John Vorster.

drove to the meetings – they made this announcement with the utmost decorum, not showing by their facial expression or tone of voice what their personal opinion about this turn of events may have been, as befits a civil servant ‘of British stock’, who is ‘above the politics of the day’. The people received the news equally stoically, remaining largely mute.



Between September and October 1976, and during February 1977, the entire population of the TTLs in Mtoko District were finally required to move into twenty-two Consolidated or Protected Villages. The deadline had been November 1976, but could not be entirely adhered to. In retrospect (2011) DC John Saunders recounted:

I took over as District Commissioner Mtoko in February 1974. My brief at the time was to keep things as normal as possible, which became difficult rather soon.

I was against moving the Mtoko people into CVs/PVs, primarily because of the difficulty of finding sufficient water for such large populations in our dry district. Bob Woollacott initially supported me. By the time Lionel Leach took over as PC mid-1975, pressure from the highest government quarters became more difficult to resist.

I was adamant that you cannot move people before you have an adequate and clean water supply. I got hold of Jeremy Prince, a borehole expert. He put his heart and soul into finding water, and he did. We put in metal tanks on concrete stands. Wherever possible we included the existing school.

I was also against moving people before they could, in fact, be protected. There was that terrible incident in a village where people were moved by the army and there was no fence, no armed presence to protect them, as yet. The guerrillas moved in, the army got to know about it and moved in after them. There was a shoot-out and in the process many civilians were killed and injured. I had to go in with a magistrate because there had to be a proper inquest. It was absolutely awful ... Also, the human mess, there had not been any toilets yet.

John Saunders was one of the few DCs who wholeheartedly supported 'women's work'. On 31 December he wrote to the PC Mashonaland East. The fact that I kept this letter – even took it home to keep – is testimony of how much I appreciated John Saunders's support.

The first four Development Workers allocated to Mtoko District had arrived at Mtoko town on 20 October. However, the villages in which they were to be stationed (Makosa and Chimoyo) were not yet ready. Hence the four new workers were accommodated at Charewa base camp, which

was fortified, about 30km north of Mtoko. One arrived to be stationed in Mutawatawa PV to replace one who had left, and two were stationed at Mashambanaka PV – both in Mrewa District.

Thus, by the end of 1976, my complement of field staff was as follows:

Women Advisers:	20	7 in operational areas
Development Workers:	18	all in operational areas
Literacy Teachers:	2	both in operational areas
Township Worker:	1	
Total	41	

WOMEN ADVISERS AND WOMEN'S WORK

31 December 1976

With the District going into protected villages I feel we should have a close look at the above. Several points come to mind:

1) Women Advisers

I have three and a new post has just been allocated. This will give 4 for 22 villages. Provided we can move them around this should be a sufficient number.

2) Development Workers

I have none [stationed] at present. Ideally I should have two for every village, making a total of 44. Obviously these cannot be obtained overnight so I feel a good start could be made by posting workers in 5 villages once they are on the ground.

3) Support for Women Workers

We give the women workers all the support we can, but they need much more. They continue to do a fine job despite great difficulties and we owe it to them to back them up.

It is my view that because of the difficulty finding suitable supervisory and support staff at District level we should strengthen the Provincial staff. The Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) cannot cope with her present commitments let alone with the increased ones once the villages are settled. I feel she should have at least one assistant for field work and clerical support to help her clear the never-ending pile of paper so that she can get out where it matters.

The resettlement programme will give us the chance to gain some lost ground especially via the women. Let's not lose that chance because we either haven't the fieldworkers or the vital support staff.

J.F. Saunders
District Commissioner Mtoko



Development Workers Monica Munezwa and Lois Ingidza were appointed to Mashambanaka PV (Uzumba TTL) on 15 October 1976. Since accommodation in Mashambanaka was not ready when they arrived, they stayed at the Mrewa training centre for two weeks, participating in two courses for councillors. The district official who brought them to the PV introduced them to the Keep commander and the corporal in charge of the DAs. The latter brought them to the headman and the headman to the village development committee composed of kraal heads.

Women Adviser Nyakabau visited them and helped them to overcome initial acceptance problems. As usual they were first suspected to be CIO. Women Adviser Nyakabau was known to many and she persuaded those who knew and trusted her that the Development Workers were not CIO but her colleagues. Over time they became accepted and trusted, too.

Monica Munezwa and Lois Ingidza found the villagers 'rather backward'. 'One needs much patience,' they said. Their main work consisted of home visits, during which they discussed any problems that women cared to bring up and tactfully dropped ideas. At the beginning they mainly encouraged better sanitation. 'Many people were unwilling to dig proper long-drop toilets. They were to the bush system,' the Development Workers said.

We tried to persuade them with the following arguments: If you all had toilets, fewer children would die; there would be fewer flies to carry germs all over. You may not have needed toilets at home, but now that you are squeezed together you have nowhere to hide while relieving yourself. It is a shameful thing to be seen by others. And if you go outside the village you may well be shot. Apparently the second argument carried more weight! But the health risk remained, as many people only dug shallow pits.

As for litter, there was not only the health hazard of flies. 'We don't think they understand this yet,' the Development Workers said. Throwing hot ashes away in the vicinity of houses also created a fire hazard and the acute danger of small barefoot children walking into embers. Eventually, every family was forced to dig a rubbish pit. The Keep commander informed the headman, asking him to inform the people, that the PV gates would remain closed for a whole day until each family had dug an acceptable rubbish pit. The headman complied and made a tour, visiting each kraal head, extolling the virtues of environmental sanitation.

The Development Workers also, of course, encouraged better nutrition during their home visits – particularly for small children. They had identified ten children suffering from kwashiorkor and managed to persuade the

mothers to add proteins such as peanut butter and even eggs to their soft porridge.

Over time, they managed to enthruse twenty-four women to meet regularly as a women's group. Its members were keen to be taught the various homecraft lessons that the Development Workers were able to offer and were keen to sow, knit and crochet various garments. However, they refused ever to elect office-bearers. As in many other PVs, no woman wanted to draw attention to herself by accepting a leadership position. An exception was Mrs P. Nyajinha, the headman's wife, who always encouraged women to form a 'proper' club – one with a management committee – or another interest group and had her husband's full support in this.

When the group had run out of donated materials, the Development Workers, resourceful as always, taught them how to prepare the sisal that was growing in the vicinity and how to work it into mats. Making floor polish with plastic bags as the main raw material was also popular.

After the Development Workers had tried in vain persuade out-of-school teenage girls to form a girls' group at which they could teach them homecraft subjects they decided that perhaps they could interest them in playing netball. They knew that the game was being taught at the Mutawatawa school. Thus Monica Munezwa visited the school and asked for instructions on how to set up a proper netball field. Having no measuring tape, she took all measurements by tying knots into a borrowed rope and attaching a note to each knot. On her return to her own PV, Lois Ingidza helped her to level a suitable piece of ground, uprooting the bushes that were in the way and setting out the field. Soon people became curious as to what they were doing and fourteen girls decided to form themselves into a netball team, which eventually even travelled to Mutawatawa school for matches. In time, some of the 'netball girls' joined the women's group for homecraft lessons.

They had most success among the mothers with the playgroup. Monica and Ingidza started the group themselves but, when the opportunity arose, Mrs Nyajinha dared to attend a playgroup course at Domboshawa. Eventually three more women attended such a course and all of them involved themselves in running the playgroup as voluntary workers after their training. About fifty children attended regularly. The Development Workers distributed 'Red Cross milk' to the children attending the playgroup and to those suffering from kwashiorkor.¹

In Mrewa District, Development Workers were not invited to the monthly staff meetings that were so appreciated by their colleagues in

¹ See page 330.

Mudzi District. Within the village, however, they had the opportunity to co-operate with the Health Assistant who visited regularly. Women Adviser Nyakabau also visited from time to time to discuss their work with them and to encourage them. Two farming groups were in time formed with the support of the Agricultural Demonstrator.

Lois Ingidza argued in her annual report that they should be allowed to visit the Development Workers in Nyakosoro and Mutawatawa PVs to support each other and to 'share ideas', which would enable them in time to organize an inter-PV women's club show.



At the beginning of the year I had had eight Development Workers, eighteen Women Advisers, and one Township Worker to supervise and support – a total of twenty-seven. A further two Women Advisers and fifteen Development Workers were stationed in Mashonaland East during 1976, two of the latter being Literacy Teachers. Two Development Workers, appointed in 1975, had resigned earlier in the year, one to get married and one because of 'problems in her family'. One, also appointed during 1975, was transferred to Chiredzi at her own request. These three were replaced. Thus, all in all, by the end of the year, twenty-three Development Workers had 'passed through my hands', though I remained with twenty. Some Development Workers were also transferred between PVs, and even between the three sensitive districts of the province, necessitating additional administrative work related to staffing.

Four Women Advisers – in Mrewa and Mudzi – were already living in PVs. With ten pairs of Development Workers, I now had fourteen PVs to visit. The Mtoko Women Advisers and their 'neighbours' were moved into PVs only in early 1977, which then gave me seventeen PVs to cover with supportive and supervisory visits. In time, the neighbouring villages were to be considered. There were another thirteen Women Advisers working in 'non-operational areas', plus the Township Worker.

When would the senior staff in head office see that I needed an assistant? Had DCs Mudzi and Mtoko not made it abundantly clear that the men in their stations had to (and wanted to) concentrate on the 'war effort' and could not give the women workers the support they needed? Had some of the DCs in non-operational areas not complained about an insufficient number of supervisory visits by the PCDOW? Had head office even glanced at my time-and-motion records?

Two additional Women Advisers' posts had been granted to the province, so I also did selection interviews in Mtoko and Goromonzi districts during

the year – three times in Mtoko, in the area under the jurisdiction of Chief Charewa. These were unsuccessful, as no suitable woman applied. John Saunders eventually recommended that the new Women Adviser should be placed in the area of Chief Chimoyo, but added that ‘the disruption of community life through terrorism and resettlement may make adequate advertising difficult and prevent women from coming forward’. Indeed, only one candidate presented herself. Regrettably she was also unsuitable.

In Chikwakwa TTL (Goromonzi) seven women applied for the post. I shortlisted three, but one, Idah Nhamburo, was clearly the most suitable. She had been active as a voluntary worker for many years, was strongly supported by her husband in doing this, was much liked by the local women, and lived in the right area.

In Seki TTL, where another Women Adviser was clearly needed, no fewer than twenty women nominated by the women’s clubs’ area general meeting presented themselves for interviews. I interviewed eleven. In addition, fourteen other women applied of their own initiative, of whom I interviewed seven. I shortlisted four of those elected by the women’s clubs, of whom two, Mrs P. Mubaiwa and Mrs J. Muronzi, were both eminently suitable. Together they had trained the ‘Red Cross girls’. Mrs Mubaiwa would have been my first choice. She had done outstanding voluntary work for years before being trained as an HED and had redoubled her efforts since. However, her husband presented a major impediment. We required Women Advisers to be only wives. He was intent on marrying a second wife according to tradition, despite his being married under the Marriages Act (i.e. having a civil and/or church marriage), which forbade polygamy. African men could neatly sidestep the provision of monogamy in the Marriages Act. When *lobola* was paid, African custom regarded the couple as married. However, a customary marriage was not regarded as a legal contract under statute law. Thus there are, even today, countless men who have two or more wives, despite having married their first wife in church or at the magistrate’s court. They cannot be sued for bigamy.

Women Adviser Chivanga of Seki was active but was getting on in age and really could have done with help. So could Mrs Guzha in Seki Township. Women Adviser Muguto in Chikwakwa still had too big an area to cover. Thus, in principle, the posts were welcome, despite the additional work involved. However, Wyn Wilson changed her mind and transferred the two posts for which I had found such suitable candidates to another province. To the best of my knowledge, Mrs Mubaiwa was trained in 1978, her husband having seen the error of his ways.



Between July and November 1976, Local Government Awareness training, conducted by the BCDT at my request, continued in Gatooma, Hartley, Wedza and Goromonzi districts and, surprisingly, even in Uzumba TTL in Mrewa District.² Women Advisers mostly organized lessons for new groups, but in a few areas they also organized follow-up lessons for women who had previously attended initial awareness training. Men had started to ask why such training sessions had been arranged for women only, so again we invited them to join ours.³ This backfired to some extent at a few venues because women felt inhibited by the men's presence, yet we hoped that men and women would start discussing civic affairs in their homes. Women Advisers took care to include prominent men by inviting both traditional leaders and councillors. They again invited Community Advisers and even councillors to share some of the teaching with Mr Chitsenga, the mobile unit trainer, who was very open to this.

In most places, the training offered was again a tremendous success, with great numbers of women attending. Not so in Wedza – which signified that the district had been infiltrated and that people were being discouraged from attending lessons to do with councils. In Hartley and Gatooma districts, attendance and enthusiasm were high. In Hartley District alone (25–29 October, 1–5 November) 383 women and 299 men attended at nine venues. Both the Women Advisers, M'pakaviri and Nkomo, and the Community Adviser, Mr Gwanzura, attended all sessions, the latter often participating in the training by taking the session on council committees. The lessons were new for all the groups, and all asked for further training. The Women Adviser observed carefully and endorsed which lessons needed reinforcement. At every venue, women requested that women be allowed to become councillors, representing women's needs.

In Wedza District, however (6–10 September), there were signs of trouble. Women Adviser Mrs Sakuringwa reported that 'a terrorist attack on the Zviyambe Council had taken place two weeks before these meetings. People were frightened.' At a further two venues in Wedza TTL no-one turned up. It was highly probable that the 'comrades' discouraged participation in these training sessions. One of the nationalists' aims was to disrupt, and preferably destroy, the administration, including councils. We cancelled the second round of training planned for Wedza District from 13 to 17 November.

² Gatooma: Sanyati TTL, Chenjiri APA (WA Chida); Hartley: Mondoro TTL, areas of chiefs Nherera, Mashayamombe and Rwizi (WA Nkomo); Wedza: Wedza, Zviyambe APA and TTLs (WAs Sakuringwa, Goto, Chitumba); Goromonzi: Shangure, Rusike, Chinyika, Chikwaka (WA Muguto); Mrewa: Uzumba TTL (WA Nyakabau).

³ In fact, there had, of course, been training on councils before – for example, to stimulate their formation – attended mostly by men, which those who complained now had evidently not attended.

John Chitsenga also sent me his reports, which he compiled using a very concise standard report format devised by his superiors. Interestingly, he never mentioned that women everywhere asked for women councillors. Knowing him well, I knew that he would personally have supported women being given the vote and being allowed to stand for election. Did he know the franchise qualification stipulated in the council warrants of the areas he taught in? Why was it nowhere reported that the warrant, in almost all cases, would have to be changed to enfranchise women? I became conscious that, because women in most areas asked whether women could become councillors, I should have made a specific request to the provincial training officer, John Brown, that the franchise qualifications stipulated in each council should have been discussed. I realized that I would have to address this issue myself. John Chitsenga gave attendance figures for both the awareness training sessions and the film shows he put on in the evenings. As was to be expected, attendance at the film shows usually far exceeded those at the council sessions.

I had few detailed reports for Gatooma District. Unfortunately, Women Adviser Chida did not attend three of the five sessions in her area, as each time, on the crucial date, she was called by the district office to attend to something else. Once, though, she was glad to be called to the office, hearing that a new women cadet had been appointed, whom she was to be introduced to. One meeting in her area was poorly attended because it clashed with the official opening of the Sanyati Road.

The opening of the tarred section of the Sanyati road, towards the cost of which the community had contributed on their own initiative, was a big event, with many dignitaries attending. The DC was there, of course, with his retinue, and so were several chiefs and headmen and the councillors of the areas that the road passed through, as well as their wives. Refreshments were laid on.

The Secretary for Internal Affairs, A.D.B. Yardley, produced a highly effective gimmick. He arrived by small plane, landing at the nearby mission, with a suitcase full of cash, neatly bundled, representing the government's contribution to the road. He praised the Gokwe cotton farmers highly for having taken the initiative to collect the 'seed money' for tarring the road. 'Government is so pleased about this', he said, 'that government has added this amount to what you collected.' At this, he opened the suitcase and had it paraded in front of the men and women seated on the ground. Awed cries of 'Aaah' and 'Maiwe' rose from the crowd. 'With this, the road is fully paid for!' Yardley said. The contractor confirmed it. He was handed a cheque, of course, and the cash went back to whichever bank had provided it.



I conducted the annual Women Advisers' refresher course from 22 November to 3 December, heart-sick about the war. We had the honour of Chief T.C. Mangwende, Minister for Development for Mashonaland East and Manicaland, opening our course, though I had not initiated this myself: we never had official openings of our courses by VIPs. Minister Chief Mangwende read out a very complimentary speech covering what rural women, with the help of Women Advisers and the PCDOW, had achieved in Mashonaland East. It was interesting that the Minister Chief made no mention whatsoever of the fact that a violent civil war was raging in the province and was severely affecting our work. The war was raging in the chief's domain, Mangwende TTL in Mrewa District, too.

The opening of our refresher course by Minister Mangwende was briefly reported in the *Rhodesia Herald* the next day, with the headline: 'Chief Praises Women Advisers in Tribal Lands'. Plain-paper copiers not having reached Rhodesia yet, I bought twenty copies of that issue so that Women Advisers could take either the whole paper or the brief article home to their families. They all got roneo'd copies of the whole speech, of course, which had also been translated into Shona.

The bulk of the programme was devoted to the development of report-writing skills and programme planning, but community development, local government, pre-schools and nutrition were also included, as were Wyn Wilson's interviews, a field visit, and a number of problem-solving sessions. I put great stress on the latter. Once again I appreciated Miss Wilson's verbal reviews of each Women Adviser's work for the year: she made every one feel valued.

Women Advisers in PVs had continued with the Two-Tone Plan as best as they could, but I needed to adapt their official job description to changed circumstances. We did this together during a problem-solving session and agreed on 'The Role of Women Advisers in Protected and Consolidated Villages: A Handbook'. It was again stencilled, then run off on rather dark-blue newsprint, the only paper I could get. There were no glossy printed booklets in those days – in fact, there was not even any bond paper in government offices at the time, at least not in the lower strata.

As early as the 1975 refresher course, during my problem-solving sessions, we had discussed whether Women Advisers in operational areas should continue to wear uniforms, considering that government workers had become guerrilla targets and many of them had left government service. The consensus among Women Advisers at the time was this:

I have always worn the Women Advisers' uniform, I have always been proud of it, I have always been proud of my work. If I now take off my uniform, it is like saying that I am ashamed of the work I did and the work I am still trying to do now. If 'they' want to get me, they will find me, whether or not I am wearing the uniform. I will continue to wear it.

One of them had remarked, 'Mrs Chenaux-Repond can't take off hers', meaning my white skin. I was, I must admit, very conspicuous in the field. Apart from the woman pilot, a few district officers, some missionaries (such as Esther Finster at Nyadiri) and Mrs Tucker, the Director of the Red Cross Society, at Marenbe PV, I had not seen another white woman out in the operational areas, ever. As a Section, we gave them a choice: by 1976, uniforms were no longer compulsory. In time, most Women Advisers wore their uniforms while working in their own PVs but did not wear them when travelling between them. By mid-1977, the Women Advisers in Wedza were no longer wearing theirs at all.

A lesson on 'community development' was compulsory in every course that a government department or voluntary organization booked at Domboshawa – it was, after all, the National Training Centre for Community Development and run by the Branch of Community Development Training. However, Peter Hancock, a senior training officer in the BCDT, agreed with me that giving the standard introductory lesson to Women Advisers would be a waste of everybody's time. Instead, he personally gave them an interesting talk on community development in other countries, including in the West, illustrated with slides.

I continued my civic-affairs training for Women Advisers. By now, the Regional Councils Officers, Mashonaland East (P.A. Sharples) and Mashonaland West (L. Rix), had become intrigued that so many women in the TTLs attended council awareness training sessions. They presented informative talks on the structure and functions of the Provincial Authority. These were augmented by a field visit to the Provincial Authority Mashonaland East, where the Senior Executive Officer, Mr Shoko, and the Provincial Authority Officer, J.M.J. Leach, received us warmly, showed us around, fully explained the Authority's structure and functions, answered questions, and gave us tea.

Nutrition lessons were compulsory – by Wyn Wilson's decree. I would have thought that Women Advisers would have had enough of these by now, but we could integrate that topic with the lessons on playgroups by concentrating on the nutritional needs of the young child. Since pre-schools – I preferred the term 'playgroup' to 'pre-school', as it stressed play – were springing up in so many TTLs and were to become important

Extracts from reports of Women Advisers Margaret Chitumba and Susan Sakuringwa (Wedza)

Margaret Chitumba

At Rambanapasi School, Nyahuye-wa-Soswe Council area, Chief Nyahuye-wa-Soswe. At the second venue, Mutukwana School, no one appeared.

Attendance: 66 women (including Headman Mbaiwa's wife, the women's club area and district chairwomen); 7 men (including a councillor, a headman and 5 kraal heads).

Despite the present situation people are willing to learn. The course was a bit too long for beginners, though. Especially the last lesson on the budget needs more explanation to the same group. I could not observe which aspects women were most interested in, as they sat back waiting for the men to ask or answer questions. This was the disadvantage of having men present. On previous courses, with no men invited, the women did participate. They would like further lessons, but without men.

Susan Sakuringwa

Zviyambe Purchase Area, St Chad (Mapumba), Zviyambe Council

Attendance: 17 women (including a councillor's wife and an Extension Assistant's wife); 8 men (including a councillor and a farming group leader).

The meeting started so late that Mr Chitsenga had nearly given up. It was not possible to see whether people were interested."

Zviyambe Purchase Area, Makarara Township, Zviyambe Council

Attendance: 23 women (including the council chairman's wife, a councillor's wife, the Extension Assistant's wife, and the Home Economics Demonstrator); 4 men (including the council chairman, one Intensive Conservation Area chairman and two Extension Assistants).

Attendance and interest were poor, I think because of terror. I cannot really say whether the women were interested, because they remained silent. I also cannot say yet whether they would like further lessons.

St Mark's, Wedza TTL, Ruzane Council and Chief's area, Headman Goneso

Attendance: 30 women (including the headman's wife, 20 kraal heads' wives, a councillor's wife and a teacher's wife); 25 men (including 20 kraal heads, the headman's representative and the chief's messenger).

The trainer faced problems at this meeting. The men were continuously speaking up against councils and marched away before the lessons ended. The women were silent. The terrorist action which had occurred disturbed the whole movement. It needs follow-up to find out whether the women want any more lessons.

Extracts from reports by Women Adviser Flora Nkomo (Hartley)

At St Peters, Chief Mashayamombe's area (Headman Murombedzi)

Attendance: 65 women (including the members of the district, area and local women's club committees, 2 Home Economics Demonstrators and 5 kraal heads' wives); 40 men (including 1 councillor, 9 kraal heads and 2 government employees).

Women wanted to learn very much. It was their first time to learn about local government. The men were also very keen to listen and asked many questions. Some men asked, 'Why did we not get such training before?' It was explained to them that this [training] was a request from women. They thanked them very much. Women put the problem of drinking water at the school because there is no well. Mr Chitsenga explained clearly where the request should go.

The women asked for more lessons. They also asked if a woman can become a councillor.

At St Faith Masawi School, Mashayamombe Council

Women in this area are still behind. They were ashamed to ask questions because there were so many men (41 men, 42 women). So they asked me the questions after the meeting.

They were most interested to hear that even women can be in the council.

Women also brought other problems to me after the meeting. They asked how to form a women's club and I advised them what to do. They are worried about the many [teenage] boys and girls who have nothing to do. I advised them to see Mr Matondi who knows about Young Farmers' Clubs.

At Kawara School, Mashayamombe Council

Attendance: 35 women (including a Home Economics Demonstrator, 3 kraal heads' wives and a councillor's wife); 45 men (including the Community Adviser and 12 kraal heads).

When we arrived, we found a large group of men and we thought we would only teach men. But the women arrived after a short while. They were behind time because they were cooking for school children. When Mr Chitsenga started his lesson some men wanted to ask questions before being taught. Mr Chitsenga told them to keep their questions and they were all answered by his lessons.

They all want more training. Most complained about their councillor who did not report back to them [with the council's response] after they had a ward meeting at which they complained about a road needed in their area.

At Binda Centre, Mashayamombe Council

Attendance: 42 women's club members; 14 men, including a kraal head.

Men and women in this area appreciated the training very much. They thought this idea of having women to know all about local government was a good one as women are the people who stay at home [while some men are in town in wage

employment] and work in the fields in order to get money [for their husbands] to pay the council rates. Now they know where their money is going to. The women asked if it is allowed to have a woman councillor. This is a real need.

Next time we have such lessons we hope for the ward councillors to be present to let their people see them.

At Neuso Township, M'pawose Council

There was a misunderstanding about the venues for the meetings. Thus the people who should have met at an other venue thought that that meeting was cancelled. So they also came to Neuso.

Attendance: 141 women (including 12 kraal heads' wives, the council chairman's wife, 3 councillors' wives and 1 Home Economics Demonstrator); 129 men (including Chief M'pawose, 33 kraal heads, the council chairman, 3 councillors and a government employee).

Community Adviser gave the lesson on Council Committees.

Most men [attending] did not even know their ward councillors. In Chief M'pawose's area, men and women are interested very much to learn about local government. A person can tell from the turn-up of people. All what was said by Mr Chitsenga was quite appreciated. Before, even men [attending] did not know what is meant by local government. Local government and the work of council committees needs more explanation to the same group.

Chief M'pawose also gave encouragement words to his people. He is a chief who wants his people to go forward. We wish if all chiefs can support local government to be taught in their areas.

Women in this area wish to have a woman councillor in order to take their needs to council meetings as most men never worry about women's problems.

At Rwizi Clinic, Rwizi Council

Attendance: 21 women (including the chief's wife, 3 kraal heads' wives and 1 Home Economics Demonstrator); 7 men (including Chief Rwizi and 8 kraal heads).

Women in this area asked so many questions to learn. Women asked if they can be allowed to be on the council. The question was answered [with 'yes'] and the example was given of a Sanyati woman who is now on [Neuso] Council.

Men and women in this area did not know their ward councillors and if they have a problem they don't know where to go. The chief was also at this meeting and I think he will do something about this in the future.

The same group needs more lessons on local government.

in PVs and CVs, I needed to update all the Women Advisers. A member of the Playgroup Association of Rhodesia gave an excellent lesson on their chief purpose and characteristics. I gave a lesson on the difference between playgroups, nursery schools and crèches, briefly mentioning the different regulations that applied to them in urban areas and that we were developing recommended minimum standards for rural playgroups.



Women Advisers on the refresher course visit the Provincial Authority Mashonaland East. Senior Executive Officer Mr Shoko (left) and Provincial Authority Officer J.M.J Leach (right)

For our second field visit, we spent a morning at St Nicholas Kindergarten Training Centre to get insight on 'learning through play'. In the afternoon we visited the head office of the parastatal TILCOR, which managed the big estate and out-grower scheme in Sanyati TTL, Mashonaland West.

We revised the lessons on programme planning that I had given at the seminars at beginning of the year. One might well ask why I tortured Women Advisers from the war-ravaged areas with lessons on programme planning when long-term planning had become quite impossible. It might have been better for two refresher courses to be held – one for Women Advisers in sensitive areas and one for their colleagues in non-sensitive areas. However, the team loved to be together and I catered for their separate needs at the seminars I conducted at district stations, by now gathering them from two or three districts. I actually gave Mudzi, Mtoko and Mrewa the choice – a day's well-deserved rest or one day of alternative tasks. However, I also told them that, as with report writing, I was trying to upgrade their skills. Peace would return. In this or in any similar future job, this skill would stand them in good stead. They chose to improve their new skill and be on a par with their colleagues.

Intent on improving their report-writing skills, I required Women Advisers to write an annual report according to my specifications before they arrived at a refresher course. I gave them headings under which they had to report, though obviously those headings differed according

to whether or not the Women Adviser was in a PV, so I was able to garner some comparative data. In the districts that had become more recently 'sensitive', I could see how the number of interest groups and their membership had declined. To make the annual report-writing exercise more fun, I arranged it as a competition and provided small prizes.



Details of specific war incidents seldom appeared in any of the Women Advisers' monthly reports, and hardly any appeared in their annual reports. Field staff confined themselves to cryptic references to 'the situation'. However, Women Advisers sometimes sent me personal letters, giving me details of violent incidents that affected their work. Some of these letters were not signed, but I recognized the handwriting of course. Often they wrote 'tear after reading' at the end. Usually I burned such letters – I had a huge aluminium ashtray in my office in which to do this – so I have found only the one reproduced here. It was written in October 1976 and expressed only pain, not giving any details of what had happened or who had inflicted the violence.

Dear Mrs Chenaux-Repond,

I am very shocked and worried because of that new Headman Muskwe you saw on that day we were at Mrewa and we discussed with him. He passed away, he died, he was killed.

It was on the 14th and 15th that I went to his home and discussed with him and his wife about women's work. He encouraged me very much.

Now, Mrs Chenaux, how do you feel? I know you feel our pain.

I am so worried, it seems as though he was giving me his farewell.

How are you?

Tear after reading.



Both Dorianne and I invited our Provincial Commissioners to our refresher courses to listen to the WAs' concerns and to provide answers. We let Women Advisers list the problems on their own, unencumbered by our presence. If their wording was not clear, they had the opportunity to explain their concerns to the PCs verbally during the session. T.J. Hemans, PC Mashonaland Central, wrote a letter (dated 8 November 1976) to the Secretary for Internal Affairs that was copied to all DCs in the province:

At the request of Mrs Graham-Jolly I attended a session of the refresher course of Women Advisers, which turned out to be nothing but a women's lib harangue. The following points were brought up and my replies were as stated:

WAs: We request overnight accommodation and separate toilet facilities [*for women*] at the District Commissioners' Offices. [*Mashonaland Central had been the first operational area. Curfew laws applied and staff often had to spend the night when visiting the district station.*]

PC: If these are lacking and essential, DCs will be asked to put it on their estimates for minor building works.

WAs: We require [*loans to buy*] scooters.

PC: They are not on a high enough salary scale to warrant this, according to circular instructions. Is this correct?

WAs: There should be women councillors in each council.

PC: If a council is elected, then the election is free and unrestricted and we cannot force the electorate to choose a women candidate. If the council is nominated it may be a good idea to have a woman nominated and DCs will be asked to speak to their chiefs about it. [*Mr Hemans did not seem to be aware that most councils had elected councillors but that their warrants precluded women from voting and from standing for election. The Women Advisers in Mashonaland Central had not had much civic-affairs training and did not have enough knowledge about how councils were set up to argue that warrants should be amended.*]

WAs: Women should be on the Provincial Authority.

PC: [*The composition of the PA was explained to them, it was composed of the chiefs in a province, but I was requested to suggest that some women should be co-opted as non-voting members.*]

WAs: It should be compulsory for men to make wills and widows should always be the beneficiary.

PC: A will is voluntary and the beneficiary the testator's choice, but certainly publicity should be given to the advisability of making a will.

WAs: There should be women's club training centres throughout the districts.

PC: Wait for the Kissinger millions or use traditional materials [*and build them yourselves*].

WAs: There should be a women's club in the Internal Affairs District Assistants' Camp in Salisbury.

PC: Referred to Provincial Commissioner Mashonaland East.

WAs: Women should be allowed to be chiefs, headmen and kraal heads, or at least be allowed to act in that capacity.

PC: Chief Charewa was mentioned, and also Chiefs Muredzwa and Nyambvi of Mutasa District, from about 1941 or 1942. Also there is alleged to have been a female Chief Bushu of Shamva at one stage: I will put this to my next Provincial Assembly of Chiefs.

WAs: There should be lady Cadets in all districts. The good work of the girl Cadet attached to the office of the DC Bindura was cited.

PC: We cannot compel girls to join Internal Affairs but we are trying to recruit more.

WAs: Can a girl Cadet become a District Commissioner?

PC: Yes. [*Loud clapping and suppressed ululation!*]

Some, but not all, of the problems brought to the PC Mashonaland East, Lionel Leach, by Women Advisers of the province were different from those raised by Mashonaland Central.

- The curfew laws have disturbed agriculture and some women's activities greatly. [*Wedza*]
- Please can health services like latrines and water be supplied before people are moved into Protected Villages. [*Mudzi, Mtoko, Mrewa*]
- The Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) has so many Women Advisers and Development Workers to look after, and so many other duties like training and office work, that she cannot visit our work areas often enough. Can she be relieved of some other duties so that she can visit us more often? [*All*]
- Can there be a District Officer in every district who can deal with the problems of women [*in the field*] and the problems of women staff? [*All*]
- Why is it that, when women hold courses in the district, they are not provided with food [*by the DC's office*] but when courses arranged for men they get food? Yet it is the men who have [*more*] money [*than women*]. [*Wedza, Marandellas, Mudzi, Mtoko*]
- We kindly ask the Provincial Commissioner and other high

officials to consider women for training as Health Assistants and Agricultural Demonstrators.⁴ [All]

- Last year we had discussions with you about the status of women. For example, we are worried about the inheritance laws [*that widows cannot inherit from their husbands*] and that husbands can chase away [*divorce*] their wives without them being allowed to take away anything from the home except their cooking pots. Yet wives work in their husband's fields for years. You were going to discuss this with the Council of Chiefs. May we know your findings from the Council? [All]
- We work very hard and we work with field staff of all other departments [*all other field staff were male*] but we see that our salaries are lower. [All]
- Can the government give loans to WAs to buy motor cycles? [All]

The Women Advisers in Mashonaland West under my care had listed all the above points also, and added the following:

- Women in Hartley and Gatooma districts have raised money to build training centres for women or to equip other buildings to be able to use them for training for women. Is there any government money to improve them more?
- People say the Tribal Land Authorities are paid. Who pays them?
- Tribal Land Authorities should have courses so that they understand their work.
- Our PCDOW is so busy in the districts where there is war that she is not visiting our working areas.
- Can the District Commissioner be asked to meet the Women Advisers every month to discuss problems?
- Can each district have a District Officer to deal with community development work with women?

Lionel Leach noted that Women Advisers felt neglected in the field, and he could truthfully report that he was trying to get me an assistant. However, the suggestion that a specific officer at district level be assigned responsibility for community development work with women was never properly addressed by him or by any other PC. Partly it was because the PCs simply hid behind the adage that 'Women Advisers are on the staff

⁴ As a matter of policy, the Ministry of Health did not accept women for training as Health Assistants. Field duties were regarded by the ministry as 'too onerous' for women. Government agricultural colleges were not open to women students.

of the DC' and thereby chose to assume that they were given proper support, and partly because they sympathized with their fellow men's presumption that 'women's work' was boring and unworthy of a man intent on an administrative career. Confirming the prevailing male attitude, the Women Advisers in all provinces invariably stated that women district officers (who were still very rare) were far more supportive of their work than male officers.⁵

My PC also still did not believe that ordinary women wanted changes to the traditional inheritance and divorce laws. He was still convinced that I had 'put the Women Advisers up to this'. It was obvious that he had not discussed the matter of 'women's status' with the Council of Chiefs. Probably he had just forgotten about it. However, I also suspected that he had no intention of doing so in the future and that, if he had read the YWCA contribution to the Commission of Inquiry into Racial Discrimination at all (as I had suggested he did), he had no doubt dismissed their submission as applicable to a few 'women's libbers' only.

Lionel Leach had been very pleased when women attended council awareness training days in large numbers, though. His assumption was that 'they will understand government policy better'. He was surprised when he heard that there were actually women who wanted the vote at council level, that some even had ambitions to be elected as councillors. I suspected that he, too, had not really been aware that most council warrants excluded women from voting and being elected. However, during the next year he supported an appeal by the Regional Council Officer for the enfranchisement of women.



During December 1976, Wyn Wilson announced in a circular to our Section that the Minister of Internal Affairs, B.H. Mussett, had awarded Badges of Honour to Training Officer Betty Mtero and to Women Advisers Norah Chitekwe of Mtoko and T. Mudyiwa of Concession. Our next CD officers' staff meeting was to be held in Fort Victoria, and we wanted to celebrate Betty Mtero's award with a luncheon in her honour at the Flamboyant Motel.

I was dispatched to book a table and to negotiate with management to ensure there would be no embarrassment – i.e. that Betty would be courteously received, as the hotel still sported the sign Right of Admission

⁵ Women joining the Administration as Cadets from about 1974 onwards included: Anna Vasilatis, Marietta Rosendaal (Rusape), Heather Smith (Gwelo, Sinoia), Nicola Moss (Melseetter, Buhera, Gatooma, Que Que, Zaka, Nuanetsi), Barbara Collins (Marandellas), Debbie Allan (Marandellas, Mrewa), and Miss Adams (Mtoko).

Reserved, which still implied 'Africans not admitted'. I told the general manager (white, of course) about the purpose of our intended celebration and added that the Minister and Secretary for Internal Affairs would be highly displeased should there be any embarrassment to the lady who has been awarded a Badge of Honour at their recommendation. I did not say that they would be attending but to my amusement the general manager probably assumed that they would. Be that as it may, we were led to a festively decorated table and served with the utmost courtesy, the manager standing to attention when Miss Wilson gave her little speech and then warmly congratulating Betty with a handshake.



I was not to be outdone by the Women Advisers in programme planning! Towards the end of the year I made four plans of my own for 1977, using the model I had introduced, one for each main aspect of my role: supportive/supervisory, integrative, training, and policy-making. The most important and comprehensive plan was, of course, Plan 1, relating to the support and supervision of my field staff. By now I had a span of control of forty-one fieldworkers, who were stationed in thirty different locations covering an area of 41,000km². The distance between the two stations furthest from each other – in Mudzi district and Sanyati in Gatooma district – was 500km. Visits to many a location necessitated an overnight stay, but two supportive visits per worker and station were an absolute must.

While field visits to the Women Advisers' and Development Workers' work areas remained essential, they had to be geared more to the content of their programme plans. Furthermore, given such a wide span of control, new types of workers in PVs and CVs, some Women Advisers working in operational areas and others in 'normal' areas, and with the new challenge of work in an urban area (and a neglected Township Worker), a heavy training load, and closer collaboration needed with voluntary organizations than before, I looked for an ever more time-effective system of rendering support to field staff.

In respect of Women Advisers in non-operational areas especially, I did not want just to make ad hoc field visits but wanted to support the staff to achieve the specific goals we had agreed on. Listing the 'steps to be undertaken', I thought in detail about how I might get more support for the field staff from other actors. I myself would never achieve three or four visits per work area per year, even with a heavy (self-inflicted) input of overtime.

To manage my time better, I resolved to conduct more and more seminars at the fieldworkers' district stations, assembling all Women Advisers (and even Development Workers) of the district for two to three days at a time. At the same time, I would discuss the support required at district level with the DC or his representative or field staff of other sections; I would attend to the Keep commanders during every overnight stay in a PV. Because I was out on field trips and at training courses so often, I also needed to find more time for discussions with fellow provincial officers.

As the Women Advisers' progress plans were completed, I included steps that would specifically support their plans, so my list of steps had to be constantly revised. I was to find out that great flexibility was required on my part, but I did hope to become more focused. With an assistant to take administrative work off my shoulders I would achieve wonders!



On 29 October 1976, the Geneva conference 'spluttered into life', as the *Rhodesia Herald* put it. It failed. Meant to agree on the mechanics of the transition to majority rule, the participating black parties, with their military wings, failed to reach agreement between themselves.⁶ Ian Smith decided to pin his hopes on an internal settlement with Sithole and Muzorewa. The war did not stop. On the contrary, it intensified.

On 23 November, the Rhodesian army launched its biggest operation to date. It attacked ZANLA's headquarters in Chimoio, about 90km inside Mozambique, and, three days later, Tembué in Tete province, about 220km from the Rhodesian border. It has been estimated that Operation Dingo cost ZANLA the lives of more than 3,000 trained guerrillas, with 5,000 wounded. The Rhodesian army suffered few casualties. 'Have you read the newspaper this morning?' gentle Reg Pryce asked me in the office. 'It makes you feel proud of our boys!'

The war continued and accelerated. On 21 December, the *Herald* reported the massacre by 'terrorists' of twenty-seven tea-estate workers in the Honde Valley, in the presence of their wives and children. On that day, I was in Mutawatawa PV in Mrewa District, with Development Workers Juliet Makoni and Joy Muvhiyiwa. They had managed to encourage teenage girls to form a club, which met regularly for lessons. The girls had sewn

⁶ Bishop Abel Muzorewa's United African National Council (UANC), Ndabaningi Sithole's internally based Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), and the newly formed Patriotic Front (PF) alliance between the externally based ZANU led by Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) led by Joshua Nkomo.

and knitted their first articles, and to encourage them the Development Workers had arranged a display for my visit. I judged them and had brought small prizes to support the girls. I also put a few dollars in their meagre club kitty. They were delighted at this, and in a joyful atmosphere we discussed what other activities they could add to their programme. According to the workers, many more girls were interested in joining the group but were prevented from doing so by their parents.

Juliet had arranged for me to meet a few women who were interested in joining a women's club but did not as yet dare do so lest they become 'too visible'. I tried to hearten them by telling them that their children would benefit from what they could learn in a homecraft club. I then visited Chief Chirinda and his *vahosi* (senior wife) to pay my respects. Apparently the *vahosi* always encouraged women to join together in a women's club, and she had the qualities to lead one.

The Development Workers had also identified women who had basketry, pottery and beadwork skills, who could have helped to make the club programme more varied. Such women were identified in all the PVs and CVs in an effort to show that 'everybody' had something to contribute. However, one reason why the women may not have come forward to teach was because these skills enabled them to earn some income with which they could accumulate *maoko* property. Regrettably, there was an influential man in the PV 'who was against all progress' and discouraged both women and girls from grouping. In other respects, the Mutawatawa PV was well off, with both a well-run clinic and a primary school within its confines.

In Mudzi and Mtoko, Development Workers closed the year on a positive note. The number of Agricultural Demonstrators in the two districts had declined, but the need for vegetable growing in or around PVs for adequate family nutrition was great. Thus Dave Ford, Principal Agricultural Officer Mudzi/Mtoko, offered to conduct a vegetable-growing course for the Development Workers at the Mudzi training centre. They could then teach the village women. His course was thorough, with theoretical lessons, demonstrations and practical work, and was a great success with the workers.

My battle for an assistant continued. Since head office would not or could not assist, I decided to take up the offer made by the Provincial Authority Officer.



1977





I looked forward immensely to 1977. I had at last won my battle for an Assistant. This year I would be able to give the fieldworkers adequate support. In the end it was not the Ministry of Internal Affairs (i.e. the Public Services Board, at the Ministry's recommendation) who provided me with an assistant. It was the Provincial Authority, Mashonaland East. This solution was the brainwave of Provincial Authority Officer, Michael Leach – a friend in need, indeed!

Michael Leach first discussed the allocation of a post to community development work with women with the chiefs constituting the Provincial Authority. He talked about the value of the work done by Women Advisers and Development Workers in their communities and of the work of Mrs Chenaux-Repond, who was backing them up. He told the chiefs how many workers I had to support, what a big area I had to serve, and how hard I worked. He stressed how much better the women in the areas under their jurisdiction would be served if I had an assistant. He then invited me to talk to the members at the Authority's next meeting about 'women's work' and 'women's progress' in their areas. I did. This talk was greatly helped by the rapport between us as so many chiefs knew me personally by now and that their wives had been on 'my' courses. The chiefs unanimously agreed that the Provincial Authority would pay for an assistant's post and that the incumbent would be seconded to my office.

Wyn Wilson had to give the final endorsement, which she did, somewhat grudgingly. I was still blind to the fact that she was working hard to get the ministry and the PSB to agree to an improved structure and salaries for our Section and that she perceived me to be meddling with her efforts.

It now remained only for the conditions of service and qualifications required for the job to be worked out; Michael Leach and I co-operated on this. I asked for an African woman university graduate, straight from university, with a degree in sociology or administration. I preferred sociology because I secretly hoped that such an officer could later be integrated into the Section. The PC (Lionel Leach) was not too keen on an African woman at first but gave in gracefully. The Provincial Authorities were meant to provide employment opportunities for Africans, though primarily for those with administrative qualifications. He did not see at all, however, why my assistant should have a degree. Nor did he see why a PCDOW should have one. While we discussed the need for this he said

to me: 'A degree? But surely you could pick any woman from the street and she could do your job?' I let it be.

Fortunately Michael Leach agreed with me and put a degree in sociology or administration into the requirements for the job. Thus the incumbent fitted into the Authority's salary scale of an Assistant Executive Officer. The post for an Assistant Executive Officer (Community Development Women) was advertised in November 1976 and selection interviews conducted during December. And thus Philippa Joy Tsitsi Mundangepfupfu came into my life.

Philippa started work on 2 January 1977. This was her first job since she had completed her B.Soc.Sci. degree at the University of Rhodesia in 1976, apart from vacation employment as a research assistant. I had, of course, long written out her job description. The job summary stated her responsibilities as follows:

To assist the Provincial Community Development Officer (Women), at Provincial Headquarters, by undertaking administrative and supportive tasks connected with:

- (a) the Officer's supportive/supervisory role in relation to field staff;
- (b) the Officer's training role;
- (c) her liaison/integrative role;
- (d) her policy-making role; and
- (e) assisting the PCDOW with special assignments given her by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Encouraged by the way the 'assistant problem' had been solved through Michael Leach's initiative, the PC Mashonaland West approached 'his' Provincial Authority on behalf of his PCDOW. They agreed to his proposal, and thus Dorienne Graham-Jolly was given Kate Gondo as her assistant. In contrast to me, Dorienne did not have to prove her case with time-and-motion records, a PSB inspection of her post, and countless fruitless meetings with the head-office hierarchy.

Initially Philippa and I worked together in my small office in Harrobb House. Sharing an office was sometimes a problem when a fieldworker visited and had sensitive information to share or wanted advice on how to proceed with both her personal life and her work in the face of problems arising out of 'the situation'. Philippa was, however, very sensitive to the need for privacy and often spontaneously went for a walk when she sensed that privacy was needed, either pretending to do so or actually doing something useful elsewhere. Afterwards, we often shared much of what had transpired. Her comments were thoughtful, compassionate and constructive, and I could rely absolutely on her keeping matters confidential.

Philippa was not only a competent assistant: a close friendship developed between us. With her I could discuss my political views and the internal power politics of the ministry. Above all, I could tell her without censorship what had transpired in the war areas I visited, of my own and the staff's experiences, and how I felt about them. I told her about my personal life, my family and my friendship with fellow officers of the Section. My sense of isolation in the ministry eased.

I was soon to participate in her personal life also. Philippa was engaged to Bazibi Maphosa, who soon often visited us at the office and thus came into my life, too. He had a degree in agriculture and was employed as a teacher at Kwenda Mission Secondary School, near Wedza. Since Bazibi's family lived in a remote rural area – in Bulilimamangwe District, bordering Botswana – his family could not escape the *chimurenga*. Indeed, by the end of 1978 they had lost everything.

Because both Philippa and Bazibi had intimate experience of what it was like for people to live in a war area, they understood the circumstances that the field staff and I were working in and had great empathy. Their courtship was fraught with challenges: Philippa was a Ndau from Manicaland in the east (her parents lived in Rusape's Vengere township); Bazibi was a Kalanga, from near Plumtree in the west. This was the first difficulty. Protocol appertaining to marriage negotiations differed between these sub-cultures. Philippa was the eldest in her family, the first to get married, and she felt that she had to stick to tradition. Her father, always a strong-headed man, decided to become ultra-traditional.

Marriage negotiations were a serious matter for both the wife-providing and the wife-receiving extended families, with many formalities to observe. Both Philippa and Bazibi had spent their school years at boarding school and then gone to university, where they had met during the early 1970s. Thus they were both sorely deficient in the traditional social graces that befitted a young man courting and a young woman being courted. Either Bazibi or Philippa, or both of them, unwittingly transgressed again and again. For example, Bazibi met grandfather-in-law before father-in-law and was not familiar with the culture of clapping hands. The son-in-law (*mukuwasha*) had to pay many small gifts – all designed to prolong negotiations and cement relationships.

On some Mondays, after another of their visits to the future bride's parents, Philippa and I laughed until the tears streamed down our faces on account of another transgression against custom that either Bazibi or she herself had committed, yet another fine having been imposed 'to reopen her father's mouth' (or somebody else's), so that negotiations could continue. One day I brought my copy of Holleman's *Shona Customary*

Law from home,¹ thrust it into Philippa's hands and said: 'For heaven's sake read this and do what you are supposed to do!' But we also suspected that her father, and maybe some of her aunts, invented additional customs that had never actually existed in order to lay obstacles in the couple's path!

Of course, I also brought Philippa home, and later Bazibi also. Rolf liked them both very much, too. So did Yvonne, who was the only one at home now. (Sue had gone to Rhodes University in Grahamstown for her secretarial course and Caroline to Bulawayo for her nursery nurse training.) We interacted frequently as couples, even long after Philippa and I no longer worked together, until, years later, the Maphosas departed from Harare for Gweru and were lost to us there until recently.

During the first morning I introduced Philippa Mundangepfupfu to all my provincial colleagues. Mike Leach kindly came the next day to see how she was settling in. I ordered a name shield for her for our door, similar to mine (another long one!) from the Plastic Shop. Funny how our name shields needled some of my colleagues; they could all have bought one, too.

To the Women Advisers and Development Workers I introduced Philippa first by letter. I explained that she would not be travelling to the field, that her job was to run my office in my absence and to be my deputy when I was travelling, that she would be attending to both field staff and voluntary workers who were visiting, and would liaise with voluntary organizations and government staff as necessary.

Women Advisers and Development Workers sometimes wrote confidential letters to me about things that they could not put into their reports. As I was not part of the ministry's registry, the registry clerk never opened my mail to put documents into the appropriate files before sending them to the appropriate officers for action, as was done for all my colleagues. Philippa would never have opened a letter marked 'confidential' or even one addressed to me personally. But discussing this together we decided that procedure in respect of confidential letters would have to be explained to the field staff, to set their minds at ease. A circular went out to show them, with examples (envelopes duly drawn) of how they should address letters if they wanted them to be opened by no-one but me.

I left Philippa alone rather often during her first working month, as I had already made my fieldwork programme for January. I wanted to be sure this year that the fieldworkers would get better support than I had

¹ J.F. Holleman, *Shona Customary Law: With Reference to Kinship, Marriage, the Family and the Estate* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952).

been able to give them during 1976. This was hard on Philippa but she, too, was a self-starter.

To familiarize herself with what I did, she first read my monthly and course reports, then chose other files. She read all the incoming field-workers' reports and alerted me to urgent and important matters on my rather brief visits to the office. Only during the second part of February could I start introducing her to the head offices of voluntary organizations. Nevertheless, she was ready in no time to deal with routine correspondence. Within two months she was fulfilling like an old hand the multitude of tasks listed in her job description.

I felt guilty about leaving Philippa alone so much at the beginning. In March I would be able to involve her in the Development Workers' Seminar at Domboshawa, I promised, and during the second part of February she helped me to prepare for it.



Some PVs or CVs surrounded 'base camps'. Most locations known as base camps had developed out of DCs' 'sub-offices' or 'rest camps' of earlier and peaceful times. The rest camps had provided a strategic location and accommodation from which district staff could work during the week. Usually they attended a staff meeting on a Monday and then departed to one of the sub-offices or rest camps for several days. Since the districts were vast, it was often not practical for them to commute from home every day.

As the war intensified, the existing infrastructure and strategic location of many of the sub-offices resulted in their gradual transformation into fortified base camps. At first they were usually manned by District Security Assistants (DSAs) under the control of an Internal Affairs Cadet or national serviceman, then later gradually by the Guard Force. Since all the agencies involved in the 'war effort' worked closely together, police and army personnel were often also temporarily stationed there. Internal Affairs development officers also continued to stay there when they had work in the area.

Charewa base camp in Chief Charewa's domain, however, was somewhat different. It was built from scratch in about 1975, when the war hit Mtoko District hard, about 30km north of Mtoko on a rather desolate, flat stretch of land, complete with an airstrip. There had been no kraals in the vicinity and consequently no PV surrounded it. The camp was manned by some Internal Affairs administrative and development staff and some national servicemen. Members of the police and the Support Unit also

had their quarters. During the late 1970s Charewa base camp was used by ARU 'B' Troop, who carried out patrols into the north of Mtoko District.



Development Workers Queenie Chipaumire, Mildred Chidzungu, Winnie Mashonganyika and Rennie Njodzi had been deployed to Mtoko District as early as 20 October 1976. However, DC Saunders said that the PVs for which they were earmarked (Makosa and Chimoyo) were not yet safe enough for them to be deployed there. Thus they were initially stationed at Charewa base camp with not much to do. Their involuntary inactivity for weeks on end had rendered them demoralized. Thus, my first supportive/supervisory visit to them on 4 January 1977 took a somewhat different form from those I had made to other Development Workers to date.



At Charewa base camp

While I was usually flown into PVs, or taken there by mine-protected transport made available by the DC's office, I still travelled to Mrewa, Mtoko and Mudzi new station in my own car. I still carried the Women Advisers' library in the boot of my Renault 6. I did so this day. From Mtoko I was taken to Charewa in a mine-protected vehicle, together with my tin-trunk library. The Development Workers were obviously pleased to see me. They volunteered that they were bored and felt useless. I worked out a detailed interim work programme with them and issued them with books, both instructional and novels:

- They were to make specific articles following the knitting, embroidery and crocheting instructions in the books, later to be used as samples when actually working with women. They were to enlarge the patterns in the booklet *Kusona Zvipfeko Zvevana* (Sewing Clothes for Children) to their correct size. (To enable them to do this I had to give an impromptu lesson on pattern enlargement. I always carried a suitcase with stationery, writing implements, rubber, ruler, sticky tape, etc. These now came in handy.)
- They were to read *Dambanavana* (Play with Children) and

make toys from my own *Kugadzira Midori* (Making Toys) and the Ladybird book *Toys and Games to Make* for use in playgroups later. (This would also consolidate their skill in following written instructions).

- They were to read four novels from my library and fill in the evaluation forms.
- They were to write me a weekly report according to the format I required. Each day had to be accounted for.
- They were to dig fertility trenches for growing vegetables. There was plenty of space at Charewa to do this.
- They were to start visiting neighbouring villages Kagande, Denda and Chimoyo to study conditions and to establish contact and trust, if it was deemed safe enough.

To enable them to do all this, I undertook to send them each a village trunk (they had not been issued with one after their initial course), stationery, brown paper for pattern enlargement (newspapers with their Rhodesian propaganda were not safe to use), envelopes to store the patterns, and three huge cardboard boxes with 'junk' to be turned into toys.

The four Development Workers had attended the vegetable-growing course arranged by Dave Ford during December. I decided that they could put into practice what they had learned, even though they were stuck at Charewa. To get started, they had to enquire what Internal Affairs tools were available at the base camp (pick, shovel, badza, harrow, watering can) and whether they would be allowed to use these to dig and plant fertility trenches. I negotiated with the Extension Officer, Mr Shirichena, to bring seeds and such tools as were not available from Mtoko.



Four Development Workers temporarily stationed at Charewa base camp

I held discussions with Vedette Kang Yin, a Zimbabwean-born man of Chinese descent, who said he had worked with Development Workers to a limited extent when he was stationed in Mukumbura (where Penny Ross had worked) and, although he had not been used to dealing with 'women's things', he had quite liked it because, 'after all, it was something positive in this dismal situation of war'. I went to meet members of the Support Unit and police who thought that Kagande and Denda villages were safe enough for the workers to start visiting.

On my return to the district station, I went to see the ADC to notify him of my intended arrangements and to negotiate transport – and an armed escort, if it was deemed necessary – for the Development Workers to visit neighbouring villages. I asked for the escorts to 'lose themselves' during their stay, as the workers could not establish a positive relationship with the villagers if they were accompanied by DSAs carrying guns.

There were still some administrative matters to be dealt with. The Development Workers had not received their sensitive-area allowance of 25 cents a day, including weekends, since they had started work. I had helped them to write a claim (in the form of a letter) and visited Senior District Officer Rosenhahn, asking him 'to sort things out' with the ADF headquarters. All officials were supportive. However, as one of them said when I informed him of the Development Workers' new work plan, 'You see now that we men could not have worked out a programme for them? We would have just had to let them rot.' He had a point.

It was not just lack of interest in 'women's work' or lack of knowledge that prevented them from giving the Development Workers and Women Advisers the support they needed. The district administration proper and their semi-military personnel were by now simply too engrossed in the 'war effort'. DC John Saunders had to do much of his 'regular' work after hours. By January 1977, he was preparing the handover of the station before his impending transfer to Marandellas. He had been loved and respected by his staff, including the fieldworkers. His empathy for the people was acknowledged and appreciated, even though he and his staff could not give the women fieldworkers much practical support. Women Adviser Norah Chitekwe told me that she cried at his subdued farewell. Mtoko was fortunate to get an equally morally supportive successor in DC Brian Lucas, on transfer from Marandellas.

After my visit, the Charewa Development Workers threw themselves into their activities with renewed enthusiasm.



By the end of 1976, ten Development Workers were stationed in five different PV/CVs in Mudzi District. During mid-December they were all allowed to go on an R&R visit to their families. I had actually planned to visit Synodia Nyamana and Eva Muderedzi at Nyamande on 5 January, but since all ten of them were assembled at the district office, awaiting transport to their respective PVs, I met them as a group at 'new site'.

Discussion centred around health issues, village trunks, their cooking facilities in PVs/CVs, the safe-keeping of papers, vegetable gardens, adult literacy at Nyamande, accommodation and board at Mudzi training centre, problems with pay not yet received, the Development Workers' refresher course later in the year, problems faced by individual workers, and more. I noted action required by various Mudzi officials and all of them received a report of our proceedings – with an action column.

A few of the items we discussed are noted below:

Health care provision: With some clinics having collapsed and nurses having fled, we needed to re-think. I had discussed the idea of opening 'Red Cross Posts' the previous year with Wyn Wilson, my colleagues Dorianne and Penny, and with the district administration, the PC and the Red Cross Society. We needed Red Cross trainees who could administer basic first aid (cuts, burns, abrasions) and treat minor ailments (diarrhoea, eye infections, coughs, headaches, etc.).

Some Development Workers had had Red Cross training before starting work with us. However, the basic course did not qualify graduates to dispense medicine. For that they would need an additional course. But the following points needed thinking through: Could we spare them for such duties? No, I decided. It would not be wise to tie them down like this. Furthermore, they might well come into conflict with the authorities if insurgents came in demanding treatment. Could we find local young women with sufficient education to go for training and then operate first-aid posts? Would the Red Cross train them? Would the Ministry of Health supply basic drugs, bandages and the like? Could suitable buildings for the posts be made available or built? Who would supervise them? Would we find funds to pay them a small allowance?

Village trunks: Development Workers of Makaha, Morosi and Benson Mine PVs had not been issued with village trunks when they were stationed (as should have been done by head office), though some basic items had been given to them in November. They could not be expected to become effective without the

‘start-up’ materials. I undertook to assemble and ship these to Mudzi as soon as possible. I was grateful that Philippa could now do this.

Safe-keeping of papers: Development Workers had no desks or any kind of storage facilities for the papers, correspondence and reports they were accumulating. Those who had village trunks kept them mixed up with the materials and equipment they needed for homecraft lessons. Those without trunks kept them under their beds, if they had one, or stacked them up in a corner of their room. The workers needed a second metal trunk and I could not afford them from our Section’s meagre funds. I promised to send flat files, a punch and sturdy cardboard boxes collected from supermarkets to store their papers. Termites and damp would have to be watched out for. Women Advisers in PVs/CVs needed storage facilities for papers and reports, too.



The Women Advisers’ seminar for Mtoko, Mudzi and Mrewa districts came none too soon. During January and February 1977, the Women Advisers of Mtoko District had to move into PVs, as did their relatives and neighbours. Idah Gurupira moved into Mutsvaira (1 January), Norah Chitekwe into Chitekwe (24 January), and Felicity Moyosvi moved into Katsekunye PV sometime later. This, of course, interrupted their lives and their work severely. They were glad to take part in the seminar scheduled for 25/26 January at Mudzi station, together with their colleagues from Mudzi and Mrewa.

I now had seven Women Advisers in PVs or CVs. Dinah Nyakabau (Mrewa) had been the first to move into a PV in July 1975. Her colleagues in Mudzi (Chibisa, Psuura, Chijaka) had moved into theirs in July and August 1976, and Women Advisers Mtoko (Chitekwe, Gurupira, Moyosvi) had either recently translocated or were about to do so. Although eighteen months had passed between the first and the last of them moving, the problems each had to face turned out to be the same.

We discussed these thoroughly during the seminar. When I visited individual Women Advisers – such visits were infrequent enough – we talked more about them and one-to-one. This was when I heard in detail about the pressures, the difficulties of remaining politically neutral, the pain faced by individual workers, the violence each had witnessed or had been threatened with, their worries about their children. I felt their pain. I felt powerless. I wished I had professional counselling skills, at least.

Women Adviser Chitekwe's work area was still far too big in extent for her to cover effectively during these difficult times. Potentially she now had fourteen PV/CVs to serve, eight in Chief Mtoko's and six in Chief Chimoyo's area. Thus, against all odds, I still tried to recruit a fourth Women Adviser for Mtoko District, for Chief Chimoyo's area. DC John Saunders, though welcoming the allocation of a further post, wrote: 'The disruption of community life through terrorism and resettlement may make adequate advertising difficult and prevent women from coming forward.' Indeed, only one candidate did come forward. Regrettably she was not suitable.

Women Adviser Guripira had only one PV to serve, the one she herself had moved into, in Headman Kabasa's area, under Chief Mtoko. However, she was also meant to serve Budjga APA. The Budjga farmers were never moved into PVs. Cycling around these areas became more and more hazardous.

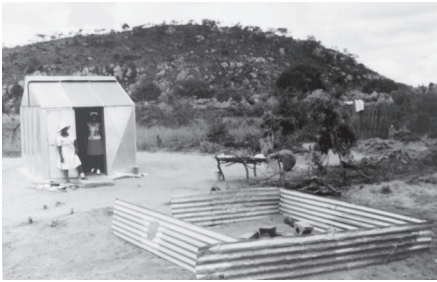
Women Adviser Moyosvi had potentially eight PV/CVs to serve, all in Chief Charewa's area. However, appointed only on 1 July 1976, she now apologetically handed in her resignation to take effect on 28 February 1977. She had already told Miss Wilson and me of her unplanned pregnancy during the November refresher course. Her resignation letter was accompanied by a letter of application for reinstatement six months after the birth of her baby. Her husband enclosed a supporting letter, in which he said that he would welcome our re-employing her when the baby was weaned. We certainly planned to do so. However, her work area would remain uncovered until early 1978.

I expected work in Mtoko District to be severely disrupted for some time. The Women Advisers admitted to being despondent and confused. I hoped, of course, that some of the local voluntary workers would in time become active again, once people had got a bit more used to living in PVs, as had happened in Mudzi District. In the meantime we had to wait until we could station the four Development Workers earmarked for the Makaha and Chimoyo PVs in Mrs Chitekwe's work area.

In principle, Women Advisers continued with the Two-Tone Plan, which became their first 'progress plan'. During the November refresher course I had also revised their official job description together as a group, for the edification of the district stations and Keep staff, who, however, did not read it unless I rubbed it under their noses.



Development Workers were given housing in the PV. Sometimes it was within the Keep. Their accommodation varied dramatically in quality from a pretty and cool two-roomed brick-under-thatch cottage at Nyakasoro, to a single room in a tin-roofed outbuilding, to an instant-erect hut in the boiling sun at Benson Mine, with both walls and roof made of corrugated iron, which was hot during the day and leaked in the rains.



Development Workers' housing in Mudzi (left) and Nyakasoro (right)

Housing did not include furniture, so they had no beds, though some of them were later issued with mattresses by the district office. The village trunk contained one paraffin stove, two cooking pots and one charcoal iron, for they had to be beautifully turned out in their uniforms at all times. Usually they had to share toilets with the village women, but they soon dug their own long-drops, and they took bucket-baths in their rooms until they built themselves a shelter with walls from thatching grass and had 'floored' it with stone slabs to allow for drainage.

The Women Advisers, who had previously always worked from their own homes, had to build their own dwellings, latrines and 'bathrooms' in the PVs. All of them had lived in a small compound, comprising a modern (that is, rectangular) brick building with several rooms to accommodate the family, with a round, brick-built, thatched kitchen hut with an improved hearth, or even a wood stove, and several outbuildings, including a granary and a Blair toilet (sometimes two, to accommodate male and female members of the family). Some had their own well. Now they had to erect 'pole-and-daga' shelters fast. They had to leave most of their furniture behind, simply locking up their old home, or finding relatives not in PVs who would store it for them.

They all had to gather firewood for cooking, as shops where they could buy paraffin were not available at first. They were reduced to a very basic lifestyle – just like the women that they were helping to adjust to a new life in vastly changed circumstances. Officially, no leave was granted for the Women Advisers to rebuild their homes, but they obviously had to do

this during 'working hours'. Since everybody's life was equally interrupted, no meaningful work results could be expected from them for some time.

Norah Chitekwe's youngest daughter, Beth, who was ten years old when the move took place, remembered years later:

The home we left behind comprised three free-standing brick buildings. The main house had three bedrooms, a living room and a kitchen. We had a Dover wood stove in which Mum used to bake cakes for our birthdays and for Christmas. She often invited local women into this kitchen and taught them baking and cake icing.

But she also had another round kitchen built in the traditional way but in brick and with a thatched roof. The girls (we four sisters and a cousin) had their own bedroom and so had the boys (my brother and two young cousins). There were several outbuildings used to store the crops. After our father died in 1975 my mother also built a two-roomed cottage for my brother, who was already seventeen.

In March and April I managed to visit all the Mtoko Women Advisers. Mrs Chijaka and her husband and toddler by then lived in a tin-roofed rectangular pole-and-daga hut. Mrs Chitekwe lived with her several children and aged mother-in-law in a two-roomed, rectangular thatched pole-and-daga hut. Mrs Gurupira only managed to sling plastic roofing over the roof poles of her two-roomed pole-and-daga home. Since Mtoko was being moved during the rainy season, thatching grass was at first difficult to find where she lived.

Norah Chitekwe's daughter Beth said:

I only vaguely remember the move itself. We were given time to build the houses in the PV. Then government trucks came



Women Adviser Chitekwe's first home in the PV

and ferried us and the belongings we could take with us into the Keep. I hated it there because it was very cramped with people living so close together, and most children, including my cousins and me, came down with scabies because of the unsanitary conditions. The army guys were rude and it was scary to be guarded all the time. There was a curfew from dusk to dawn and we had to be quiet after 6.00p.m. This was a difficult feat for a household with teenagers and pre-teens and we felt very restricted.

Our new home eventually consisted of three rectangular pole-and-daga huts. After our former home, we children thought it was really horrible. There were no floors, we had to cook on a fire, had to walk long distances to collect firewood, and had to collect water from a well about a kilometre away.

We still had to go to our former home to tend the fields and take care of the animals. (We also had an employed worker and a maid to help us.)

However, during all this time our mother managed to keep us in school. My older siblings were already away at boarding school during term time. We younger ones continued our primary schooling at Chitekwe School, about a kilometre from the PV.

Mrs Dinah Nyakabau, in Nyamara PV, Mrewa, had started in a pole-and-daga hut like the other villagers, but by March 1977 had built herself and her family a two-roomed, tin-roofed brick house with locally moulded bricks and had managed to bring some furniture from her old home. The District Commissioner had provided transport just in time before her former home was destroyed. Wanting to give the village women a good example, she had by then also put up a pot stand, a pole and dagga *rondavel* as a bathroom, and she had established a small fenced vegetable garden. Canna flowers greeted you at the entrance to her home.

In time, I managed to buy all Women Advisers in PVs/CVs sleeping bags, so that they would not have to carry blankets when they travelled to other villages. Overnight stays were often necessary.



Women Adviser Dinah Nyakabau in her PV garden



While I was busy giving support to field staff and helping Philippa to settle in, the *chimurenga* continued in the province and elsewhere. The *Rhodesia Herald* reported, among other events, the following items relating to the war:

7 February 1977: The abortive attempt made to rescue school-children who had been abducted from Manama Mission in Matabeleland to be trained as guerrillas. The youngsters were known to be in Francistown, Botswana. Government organized several buses and invited parents to Francistown to persuade their children to come home. Some 140 parents went. Of several hundred abducted youngsters, only 52 returned with their parents, mostly girls aged thirteen to sixteen. The others, some as young as twelve and thirteen, refused to go back. They wanted to be trained as guerrillas.

8 February 1977: The killing of seven missionaries at St Paul's Catholic mission, Musami (Mangwende TTL, Mrewa) by a gang of twelve young terrorists and the killing of five African men in a separate incident not far from the mission.

10 February 1977: The air-lifting of more than 300 children abducted from Manama Mission School from Botswana to Zambia, confirmed by Zambian government sources. The same sources revealed that so far more than 1,200 students from various parts of Rhodesia had been airlifted into Zambia

White families continued to listen daily to the prelude to the evening news: 'Combined Operations Headquarters have issued a communiqué', followed by the announcement of the names of the men in the Security Forces who had been killed in action. Everyone hoped anxiously that they would not hear the name of anyone they knew. The communiqué ended with reports about civilians 'killed in crossfire' and 'curfew-breakers shot'.



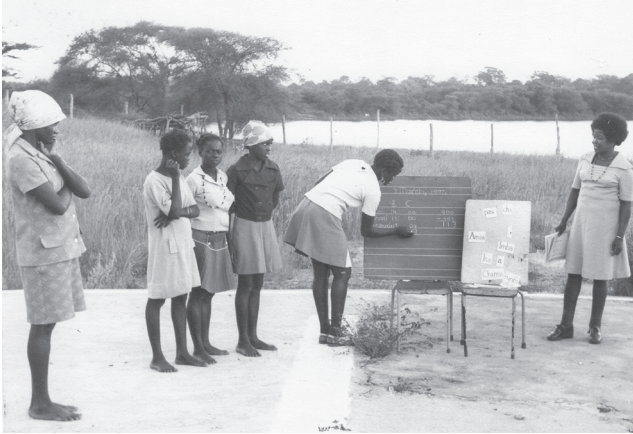
In Nyakasoro PV (Mrewa), I had been able to place Literacy Teacher Prisca Dumba, who had been trained by ALOR, in April 1976. Lessons were proceeding well. Prisca reported that her students were 'ready for promotion'. At the same time, she said again that she wanted to resign

- 'due to problems in her family at home' and in order to get married. She had already resigned from her job a month earlier but then agreed to stay on long enough for her students to graduate. I was able to negotiate with ALOR that Janet Gwanzura, my friend since 1961, would come and test the students. I would have wanted no other, but in fact other teacher-trainers on the staff refused to travel to a war area. Together we went to Nyakasoro on 3 and 4 March 1977.

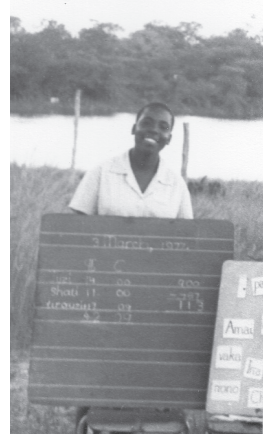
It was a rainy, misty day. Our pilot, Russell Kilner, flew low along the Mazoe river, keeping a lookout for 'enemy missiles' but giving us a running commentary on the landscape and keeping Janet, who was in a small aircraft for the first time, reassured. From time to time he asked whether she was feeling bilious, which, mercifully, she did not. Clouds floated over Nyakasoro obliterating the view and we had to circle a few times over the area where Russell told us the airstrip had to be. Then, suddenly, there was a break in the cloud and he dropped us safely on a very muddy airstrip. We were collected in the open truck, sitting on the benches, guarded by armed men. At one stage the wheels spun, spraying dirt everywhere, and we arrived in the village covered in mud.

After we had had a good wash, Janet tested the students - young women and teenage girls - and they all passed with flying colours. There was no rain the next day and I presented the certificates in the open on the helicopter landing pad. A strip of green grass, then a fence that would not have kept anybody out, let alone determined insurgents, separated us from the dam outside the village. It was a very joyous occasion, with relatives attending. Life had been made a little better for a few women and teenage girls. Synodia Nyamana, also a literacy teacher, had come from Nyamande PV (Mudzi) to rejoice in her colleague's success. We had a little tea party to celebrate with the students - with a cake baked by Eugenia Machiridza in a three-legged cast-iron pot, and with the large packet of biscuits, tea leaves, sugar and milk powder that I had brought. Towards evening we watched the catch of fish being brought in. Fishing in the Nyakasoro dam was controlled by Internal Affairs. I bought some, and the Development Workers, Janet and I had a lovely meal of bream, cooked with tomatoes and onions, to accompany our sadza.

I was worried about Prisca. I had brought my little camera to document the occasion. At first she did not want to appear on any photographs at all. She relented after she made me promise that the photos on which she appeared would remain my private property and would never be published or distributed in any way. I suspected that there was more to her resignation than that 'her family needed her at home'. Were there some specific experiences at Nyakasoro that she did not want to talk about?



Janet Gwanzura testing new literates, Nyakasoro



Prisca Dumba



Eugenia Machiridza
baked a cake for the
celebration



Graduates receiving their Stage 1 certificates
(on the helicopter pad)

Later, Prisca confessed to me that she had taken on the job as Development Worker against her parents' wishes. They were extremely worried about her safety. She had lied to them, saying that she was stationed at Mrewa township. Then a male relative who worked for the CIO had discovered her by chance at Nyakasoro. Her parents were angry. They wanted her to stay at home. Marriage negotiations were in progress. Prisca said she quite liked her suitor but was not that keen on getting married yet.

Shortly after her students graduated, her father died. She was therefore granted a few days' compassionate leave. Travelling through my office, Prisca asked me to stay her resignation: she might now need her wages to help younger siblings to remain at school. She would indeed like to stay on as Development Worker 'as long as she could go home first for

a holiday to help her mother and then be transferred to another district'. This increased my suspicion that her resignation also had something to do with an incident that had happened where she was, which she did not want to talk about. She being such an intently private person, I did not pry. Her resignation was rescinded and she was transferred to Gozi PV in Mudzi, where she started another literacy class.

Eventually Prisca did leave Internal Affairs, and she found employment with ALOR as a relief teacher in various Salisbury townships. She stayed in contact by frequent letters addressed to 'Aunt Maia'. In a particularly touching one, she offered to help me in the office without pay in her spare time, even on weekends, whenever I needed her. She also visited us at home to introduce her boyfriend. By 1980 I had lost contact with her, after she married and moved out of Salisbury. She sent me a lovely hand embroidered table-cloth (without a letter) – as a farewell present, it seemed.



In January, Dave Ford arranged for follow-up training on teaching methods by the DEVAG training specialist, Mr J. Makumbe. A month later he organized a teaching competition for the Development Workers. They had to give practice lessons on the raising of seedlings and general vegetable production and were tested and evaluated on the following teaching criteria: introduction, sequence of teaching steps, knowledge of subject, handling of questions, involvement of students, manner, voice, use of teaching aids, summary of proceedings. Eva Muderedzi, a Development Worker in Mudzi, obtained the best marks and received a much cherished 'certificate of competency'.

In preparation for the teaching competition I had sent the workers the handouts 'Recommended Vegetable Gardens' and 'A Fertility Trench to Boost Garden Crops', which had been produced by DEVAG specifically for



On Dave Ford's vegetable-growing course

PVs, plus visual aids such as empty seed packets. I expected all the Development Workers to establish a vegetable garden according to the recommendations, both for their own use and as a demonstration plot. DEVAG demonstrators or officers visited them when they could and inspected their gardens. Women Advisers, too, always wanting to lead by example,

established model vegetable gardens once they had settled into their respective PVs.

I was much amused when, at my insistence, Dave sent me the test and competition results and his comments. They were written by hand, in his flourishing handwriting, on three pieces of scrap paper (one piece had interesting information from the Tobacco Research Board on the back), patched together with staples and pins. But all necessary information was there. Dave did not believe in wasting time on superfluous or tidy paperwork, or in wasting paper.



From 6 to 11 March 1977, I was able to assemble all Development Workers at Domboshawa for a mini-refresher course. Philippa was present throughout and thus had the chance to get to know them all personally. The programme centred around their job description – what was expected in principle and what was feasible, how to explain their job to Keep commanders – report writing, problem discussion and some fun handcraft.



Development Workers, Mashonaland East, Domboshawa Training Centre, March 1977

Back row: Eugenia Machiridza, Eva Muderedzi, Patricia Rwizi, Grace Makwembere, Rennie Njodzi, Winnie Mashonganyika, Philippa Mukonyora, Lois Ingidza, Synodia Nyamana

Middle: Maia Chenaux-Repond

Front row: Elizabeth Makuzva, Joy Muvhiyiwa, Juliet Makoni, Senencia Mudzingwa, Annah Mugumisi, Mavis Magaramombe, Mildred Chidzungu, Marjorie Munuwa, Queenie Chipaumire, Monica Muvezwa

Wyn Wilson had, at long last, issued an official Development Workers' job description on 15 February 1977. I discussed it with the workers in detail during the seminar, made some adjustments, and made them translate it into Shona. I then had it run off as 'Province of Mashonaland East: The Role of a Development Worker - A Handbook', with each responsibility stated in both English and Shona.

Some Development Workers had only Grade 7 education (though others had more) and their report-writing abilities had never been developed, either at school or during their initial training. I needed far more precise reports if I was to support them adequately, and I needed comparative data to satisfy my nagging craving for action research, which I never found the time to indulge. I repeated over and over that 'someone who has never been to your village (Philippa, for example) must understand exactly what you are writing about'. We spent considerable time on developing this skill.

For fun we recycled Red Cross milk-powder tins into upholstered stools to sit on. By 1976 the International Red Cross had made its appearance in the operational areas. (That convinced me that the *chimurenga* was getting really serious!) Our Section was given regular supplies of milk powder, packed in 10kg tins. It was one of the Development Workers' daily tasks to assemble the children aged five years or less, to mix the powder appropriately and to distribute the milk. The children had to drink the milk in their presence to ensure that it did not end up in some adult's tea. One of the complications of this exercise was that the children arrived with containers of such different sizes. One little girl always came with an empty Hinds spice container: this had to be filled four times to ensure that she got the right amount of milk.

The milk-powder tins were very strong. They begged to be recycled.



Milk distribution

The first ones that the Development Workers emptied they used to store their own mealie meal as they were rat-proof. Since they were very short of furniture, I had a further idea. During our seminar, the workers made round cushions, stuffed with kapok, which fitted the top of the tins exactly. These were fitted with an elastic band that could be clamped under the lid to keep the cushion in place. On one side of the cushion the workers appliquéd a red cross on a white background, on the other a design of their own choice on dark material. The tins and the cushion now had several uses: the empty tins either became storage containers or, fitted with the cushion, an upholstered seat.

When explaining the origin of the milk powder to the mothers, or giving a short lesson on the objectives and mode of operation of the International Red Cross (which they had been asked to do), the workers could hold up the 'red-cross side' of the cushion as a visual aid. On the other side, the design of their own choice served as inspiration for the mothers and girls to try their hand at appliqué work. Similarly decorated square cushions for standard straight-backed wooden chairs were their first choice as they thought they would sell. I had more ambitious fantasies. I still hoped that the teenage girls might be inspired to make wall hangings with appliqué work depicting village scenes, perhaps even village life during the war. Where Red Cross posts were established, the Development Workers also made similarly padded seats from milk powder tins for waiting patients to sit on.



Both Women Advisers and Development Workers in the PVs and CVs worked in very difficult circumstances. Some of the problems the two types of workers faced were the same; others differed, partly on account of their dissimilar employment conditions and partly on account of their marital status.

In addition to these, Women Advisers saw the

Problems faced by Women Advisers and Development Workers in PVs and CVs

Adaptation

- difficulty adapting to village life
- so many people living so close together

Fear

- of the *vakomana*
- of the security forces
- of *mujibas*
- of denouncers

Emotional pain

- of witnessing the violence of the war
- of witnessing the effects of violence

Insufficient support

- PCDO is too busy to visit often enough
- DC's staff are too busy with the war
- some things can't be discussed with men

work and the network of working relationships that they had built up over years being destroyed. Government workers became guerrilla targets and many colleagues from other departments left. Most interest groups ceased to function, and voluntary workers went underground. They faced domestic pressures. As has already been described, they had to abandon their former homes, build new ones at their own cost, and their families' living standard was drastically lowered. They feared that their former homes would be destroyed or looted, which they often were. Even their homes in the PVs were sometimes ruined when a village was attacked by guerrillas and set ablaze. Women Adviser Psuura in Mudzi had to move CVs twice and had to rebuild three times. When her third home was burned down, she and her husband were afraid to rebuild because they might be labelled 'very rich' and thus become a target for the guerrillas. Mrs Psuura went to live with her father.

Again and again Women Advisers rose above these tragedies and helped village women to regain their courage to start afresh. Their husbands continued to support their work. They, too, deserve our admiration. Their children's schooling was often disrupted. There was an ever-present fear for their safety: fear that they might become a *mujiba* or *chimbwido*; fear that they would leave to join the guerrillas.² Development Workers had to gain acceptance from the village women that they had come to help against formidable obstacles. Initially, villagers suspected that they were 'CIO'.³ There were suspicions among the wives that, being unmarried, they might be 'loose women'.

Mildred Chidzungu, who together with Queenie Chipaumire had been stationed in Makosa, Mtoko, in April 1977, had written in her Annual Report:

We had great difficulties being accepted in the village. In August Mrs Chenaux-Repond came to visit us to introduce us officially and to explain our role. There was a great change after that and people started getting used to us. Before they took us as informers to the government. But they still don't bring us their problems. When we ask they think we are investigating them. People are politically minded.

Queenie echoed this in her report.

² A *mujiba* was a teenage boy who operated as messenger, ran errands for the *vakomana* and often took action on their behalf. Thanks to their connections with the *vakomana*, a *mujiba* yielded considerable authority over his own parents' generation. A *chimbwido* was a teenage girl who acted as messenger or carrier, ran errands for the *vakomana*, and often cooked for them.

³ Although literally meaning a member of the Central Intelligence Organization, CIO was often used simply to mean a government informer.

Sometimes there were unwelcome attentions from DSAs, and sometimes a lonely Keep commander would 'fall in love' with a Development Worker. Occasionally, there was temptation if a Development Worker really liked a suitable man, but they knew better than to enter a relationship with a DSA or other military or paramilitary personnel. The villagers would never have trusted them again.

We discussed these difficulties during our refresher courses, our seminars at district stations, and during my visits to the PVs and CVs, especially when I stayed the night. We often sat together under the stars until 'lights out'. That was when I listened with a heavy heart to their accounts of the violence they had witnessed, trying to comfort them and give them emotional support.

As government workers, both Women Advisers and Development Workers were always in danger of being targeted as sell-outs. They could not afford to fall foul of the guerrillas. They also had to meet the DC's work expectations and mine. Above all, they had to remain acceptable to the villagers. Thus, they never initiated political discussions with the people. When others did so, they just listened. In my opinion, they managed to walk this political tightrope because they were utterly dedicated to the aims and mode of operation of our Section – convinced that what they were teaching the women was important, no matter what political system they would live under.

Some men in positions of power will use that power to obtain sexual favours from women. The DSAs in PVs were no exception. If I heard about an incident and had substantial evidence, with dates and names, I reported these to the Keep commander and, more importantly, to the relevant DC. The latter took action more than once in respect of DSAs who overstepped the mark. However, as soon as the security forces were involved, there was little that DCs could do.

During one of my PV visits I had to listen to another sickening report, first from the Development Workers, then from the mother of the young woman herself, when I went to see her to commiserate. Mai Nhamo's daughter had fetched water from the nearby dam. On her return, at the entrance gate, as she was steadying her bucket on her head, two DSAs started fondling her breasts and 'proposing' to her. She threw her bucket of water over them. The DSAs, infuriated, took her *situpa* (identity card) from her.

She was later collected for interrogation. She told her mother that she was hung by her feet at Nyamande Keep and beaten by three Europeans, with grey berets, who had been riding horses. Mai Nhamo thought that the DSAs, in retaliation for having had a bucket of water thrown at them,

had denounced her daughter for 'having gone to meet the terrorists' in the veld. She was beaten all over her body, her dress covering her face. She had her period at the time. Her protective rags fell to the ground when she was beaten between the legs. She was taken to Nyamapanda later, though it was not clear for what purpose. 'No,' her mother said, 'she was not beaten there. She was put in a room on her own and the European there said she must be well looked after, and be given food and water, as she had been beaten terribly.'

It was the Development Worker who told the mother where her daughter was when she had not returned home with the water. The mother went to see the chief, who lived in the village, and told him. He could do nothing. The daughter was at Nyamapanda from Sunday to Tuesday, and was then brought back to the PV. Mai Nhamo believed that her daughter had never had contact with the *vakomana* while she was staying with her. 'She was here visiting me. She normally stays with Methodist Minister, Mr Dziwa, at Chindenga, Mtoko, working as a house girl. She left here when she was well enough. I have told her not to visit me again in this place.'

Mai Nhamo did not report the DSAs to the Keep commander or to the ADC when he visited. '*Tinehondo*. There is war. We have to suffer what comes.' I did report them, but the soldiers had moved on, and we had no proof that the DSAs had denounced the young woman – though, knowing the mother well, I had no doubt she was telling the truth. But the DSAs did get another stern warning not to interfere with village girls.

I often stayed in the Keeps overnight. Until the compulsory 'lights out', I could sit with the Development Workers and listen to the difficulties they faced and hear about the violence that surrounded them. As we sat together under the stars I tried to give them as much moral support as I could. There was no doubt in my mind that these young women had their hearts in their jobs, that they wanted to contribute to making life in the PVs in a situation of armed conflict more bearable for the women and children. They were often walking a tightrope, trying to remain politically neutral, showing due loyalty to the ministry that employed them, yet needing to gain the trust of the villagers. Incredibly, they mostly managed to do so.

I never asked any Development Worker or Women Adviser if they had had any contact with the guerrillas. We remained silent on this issue by tacit agreement. I suspected, though, as the war progressed, that this was almost unavoidable. If I asked them, and if they had had contact, I might have forced them to lie. If they had volunteered such information they would not have been able to avoid the nagging thought, 'Did she report me?' I would never have done so.

Three decades later, when I met one of the Development Workers again, we came to discuss this point. She smiled and said:

My colleague and I were aware that you never asked us and we were very grateful for this. I think we sensed why you did not ask. As a matter of fact, the two of us did have some contact with the guerrillas. After some time in our PV, when the people had begun to trust us, some leaders took us to a nearby guerrilla camp. We explained our role and the commander said he approved. However, he also said that to show 'goodwill' we had to knit balaclavas for the *vakomana* in his unit. We did. As a result we were never interfered with. It may even have saved our lives. Once, when we returned from the district station to the PV by bus, the bus was stopped by the *vakomana*. They ignored us – I thought one of them gave us a 'knowing look'. However, some other men and women were taken off the bus and they were never seen again. We heard that they were accused of being sell-outs and killed.

No [she answered my next question], we never had to attend *pungwes*; we were neither forced to attend nor invited. Of course we were glad about that, as it would have put us in a very difficult situation.



In some districts we could still operate normally. I was able to follow up on local women's further requests for Local Government Awareness training and arrange a five-months' programme with the mobile training units of the BCDT. Women Advisers Nhavira, Guzha, Nkomo, Mapininga, Chida and M'pakaviri had sent in detailed requests for specific TTLs/APAs and for council areas within them, suggesting places and times at which training should be held. They stated whether it was to be initial or follow-up training and made bids for specific films (not necessarily related to local government) that could be shown at the same venues in the evenings.

The Women Advisers not only grouped women but also specifically invited the chiefs, headmen and kraal heads of the area – and their wives. I further asked Women Advisers to invite the council chairman, the councillor for the ward in which the training was being held, the council secretary and the Community Adviser. They could participate in the training by giving talks on agreed topics and answering questions on what the council was endeavouring to do in specific wards.

Basic attention was again given to 'how councils (and their committees)

function'. This was followed by advice on how to formulate women's concerns and requests and how to lobby the council to take action upon them. Council budgets were also explained. In quite a number of places, women again complained that they had no vote in elections and that they could not stand for election. Where men were present, this led to some lively debates. Typically, when the Ministry of Internal Affairs had introduced 'Community Development leading to Local Government' in the 1960s, they did not think that far ahead. Also, typically, male field staff, male District Officers and male DCs called the 'tribesmen' together and addressed all-male audiences when they talked about such important matters.

Mrs Nhavira, Women Adviser Chiota TTL, was able to arrange an advanced five-day (mornings) course on Local Government for Women Leaders from 7 to 11 March. Eighteen women, most already in a leadership position, attended the course, though not all of them attended all sessions. There were quite a number of visitors to the course, including Senior District Officer Debbie Enslin, the Community Adviser, trainers from Rowa Training Centre, Umtali (the BCDT had a training centre in each province), a councillor, a headman and two kraal heads, and Women Adviser Naomi Shekede.

For Chiota Council, only male ratepayers were enfranchised. Mrs Nhavira did not miss the opportunity to ask the BCDT's Mr Mtetwa how its warrant could be changed to give women the vote and to allow them to stand for election. The trainer, who was very sympathetic, knew himself that it would need a long, hard lobbying process. He told the course participants this, but could not give them much advice on how to go about this. Louisa Nhavira resolved to ask my advice on drawing up a 'progress plan' to effect a change of the warrant.

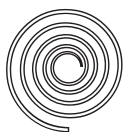
Mr Mtetwa administered pre- and post-tests to measure the knowledge gained. I am not sure how accurately such tests actually measured the knowledge gained, especially the multiple-choice tests which, in my view, also depended on the reading skills of people who seldom read.

With the help of Debbie Enslin, Mrs Nhavira wrote a well-structured and informative course report. In her course evaluation she said that the training was excellent, the keenness of the women very encouraging and that the learning purpose had been achieved. The participants were hoping for better rates collection because they needed a clinic to be built soon. They wanted another course for revision, but they also wanted some homecraft practicals to be included, possibly in the afternoons, to break up the learning sessions.

Mrs Nhavira rated the attendance as 'poor' because of 'the present

situation' – she knew that more women had actually wanted to take part in the advanced course but did not dare. I could not attend many of the training sessions taking place in this and other districts as the 'operational areas' took up most of my time. Regrettably, Mrs Nhavira's advanced course coincided with my Development Workers' seminar.

A further round of Local Government Awareness training followed between July and November. The detailed records for five TTLs and one APA are lost, so I can account only for 743 women and 55 men attending those lessons during 1977.



The *chimurenga* was spreading. Marandellas and Wedza districts were no longer the peaceful districts I persisted in thinking them to be. Indeed, Women Advisers had gently told me so during the preceding year. In Wedza, I had held a Women Advisers' seminar at the district station from 19 to 21 January and had attended a field staff meeting. All had seemed normal on the surface, yet the district had also been seriously infiltrated during the past year. The army had moved in and a curfew had been imposed.

In Svosve TTL, surrounded by European commercial farms, a group of off-duty territorial soldiers and members of the Police Anti-Terrorist Unit, following the tracks of cattle rustlers, intercepted a group of women bringing cooked food to a guerrilla camp. A skirmish ensued and a number of guerrillas were killed or captured. Svosve rest camp was fortified, and thus became a base camp.

Marandellas District had been infiltrated for some time, and in response Internal Affairs paramilitary personnel had been stationed there. No sooner had John Saunders replaced Brian Lucas as DC in January 1977 than a Vedette was ambushed, though not seriously wounded, on his way back to the office after a day of supervising cattle-dipping. After this incident, all Internal Affairs buildings were protected with sandbags, and armoured vehicles were introduced. Both regular staff and Vedettes were issued with two-way radios. Chiota base camp was established and another one was set up in the APA south of Chiota TTL. There was still little in reports from Women Advisers Nhavira and Shekede to indicate infiltration. Local Government Awareness courses had been successful.

Early in 2015, I was able to interview former Women Adviser Louisa Nhavira, who still lived in Chiota and still farmed her late husband's land. Now aged 84, she reminisced:

The coming of the comrades did not affect us Women Advisers that much. We were respected and they left us alone. I know it was different for others in other districts. In fact, the jealousies of some who wanted our jobs after independence affected us more.

I think there were never as many comrades in Chiota as there were in the border districts. There were not many forests or even bushes and no kopjes where they could have hidden. There were no *pungwes* in our area because there were no places for big

gatherings to hide. There were, however, big political rallies at Mahusekwa during the daytime.

The organizer had to apply for permission to hold them and they usually got it. Even as a civil servant you would not dare to stay away for fear of being branded a sell-out. But the police, the CIO and the representative of the DC's office were also there. So they knew who the politicians were and who said what. At such rallies we were given nationalist political education and we were informed about the progress of the war. The local *svikiros* supported the comrades and, later, Robert Mugabe specifically. They still do so today, otherwise he would long be gone.

Everyone knew, of course, that I was a government worker. Once, at a political rally, there were shouts that they wanted a speech from me. I *had* to give a speech; there was no way out. Thus I made much ado about 'if we don't liberate ourselves, we will be slaves forever'. If I had said something like 'the *mudzviti* [DC] is a good man, you must listen to his advice', I would have set myself up to be killed. In fact, the present DC and the one before him were good men and their advice on development was always sound. But at a political rally I could not have said that.

My husband was a politician. He had joined the National Democratic Party under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo before it was banned in 1963. They then formed ZAPU. After some time there was a leadership struggle and the party split into ZAPU and ZANU. ZANU was active in Mashonaland, while ZAPU operated mainly in Matabeleland. My husband remained with ZANU, which was in time led by Robert Mugabe.

During the 1970s, Dominic Nhavira was a local ZANU cell leader. He held many political meetings, but *never* in our home. He respected that I was a civil servant and thus was not allowed to be actively involved in politics. In private, my husband and I did discuss politics, though. In truth I was very interested. I wanted independence; I understood that the armed struggle was the only way to get it. But I also I saw that it brought much suffering. So I was in two minds all the time.

I did not like the racial discrimination I saw operating in town. For example, once my husband wanted to take me to a hotel for tea to celebrate a successful prospecting venture. At the entrance they said to us harshly, 'You cannot come in here. If you want tea, get it at that window!' There was a window in the wall at which we had to take our tea standing on the pavement.

Many white people were very rude to black people, even on the pavements in town. Some white shop assistants did not even like to serve you. Such humiliations hurt deeply.

At the same time, I did not see why I should hate all white people. We had white friends with whom we could have political discussions. Some missionaries were even deported for supporting the nationalists. At work I was always respected. Besides, in *ruwadzano* groups of all denominations we are taught not to hate. If someone has indeed wronged you, it can be discussed, resolved and forgiven. There are good people and not so good people in all communities.

At the DC's office, and when working with women, I kept my political views to myself – not only because as a civil servant I was not allowed to be politically active but because, as the war progressed, you could never know whom you could trust. Mistrust and fear came into all of our lives. In the office you could be denounced for being a terrorist supporter. Outside you could be denounced for not supporting 'the boys'.

What is a sell-out anyway? Even in Chiota many people died because they were denounced. It is evil to settle personal issues in this way. It pains me deeply that the husbands of Norah Chitekwe and Colleen Goto should have been killed because they were denounced. Such good people! I shudder. And I knew others who had such a terrible fate.

At the time I also wanted 'women's problems' to be sorted out. Issues like women not having the vote in council affairs, the 'rate for the job' (a women with the same qualifications doing the same job as a man but being paid less) and the unjust inheritance laws. While we had brought this up with the Provincial Commissioner, we had seen no progress. I believed that an independent government would change these injustices.

In early 1978 (you were already transferred) it was reported to the DC that I was involved in politics. I was at a course at Domboshawa, and Mrs Enslin came to see me. She asked me if my husband and I were involved in nationalist politics. I said I was not, but I answered her questions about my husband truthfully. She told me that I must on no account return to Chiota right now. I felt that she was telling me that my husband and I were in great danger. Although she told me not to return there, I secretly left for Chiota immediately. My husband did not believe me at first that he was in danger of being arrested, or

possibly killed. I said: 'I have been forbidden by the DC to return to Chiota for the time being and I am leaving for Salisbury now.' He then agreed to come with me.

We went to stay with relatives and for a short while I worked in Miss Wilson's office. Then Miss Wilson went to Marandellas and told the DC to take me back as I was not involved in politics. He did.



Two stories told by peasant women caught up in the *chimurenga* in Wedza TTL were recorded in *Mothers of the Revolution* and illustrate what I mean by a district being infiltrated and the army moving in.¹ Liza Teya's story illustrates willing co-operation with the comrades from the start, not only by herself but by countless other women, in the form of cooking for them, supplying blankets, clothes and cigarettes. A male Community Adviser in Mtoko District had once told me: 'The army will never win the war against the guerrillas. The people support them because they regard them as their own children.' I did not know these particular women or of their experiences then – I read their stories only long after independence. However, at the time, I gradually became aware that the Women Advisers in Wedza TTL were caught up in a network of traps similar to those of their colleagues in the 'operational districts'. They continued in their work, utterly dedicated and convinced that what they taught and encouraged was of benefit to their fellow women and their families. They continued to be accepted by the people.

I gave former Women Adviser Margaret Chitumba Liz Teya's story to read in 2014, because Chigondo, where Liz Teya lived, was in her work area. She said: 'I did not know this woman, but her story describes some of the things that were happening around us at the time.'

Mrs Chitumba's annual reports give some indication of how women's and other activities were affected. At the end of 1976 she had written:

At the beginning of the year I worked successfully with good responses from the women. They were quite free to say their views at meetings and during visits to their homes. They were willing to go for courses, and they shared their new knowledge with fellow women. They were able to plan their work and do their projects. But then the situation was changing. People no

¹ See the stories by Loice Mushore and Liza Teya in Irene Staunton (ed.), *Mothers of the Revolution: The War Experiences of Thirty Zimbabwean Women* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1990).

longer had the freedom of speech and movement they used to have. Most are now quiet in their homes, concentrating on field work. Anyway, I hope and look forward to a brighter future on women's activities next year.

Mrs Chitumba reported that women's interest groups had started to decline. There had been ten active women's clubs in her work area – Upper Wedza. By the end of the year they were down to seven. Savings clubs, composed of both women and men, declined from eight to six 'because of the general feeling of people towards political matters'. Yet a number of courses to prepare for the annual show had still been held and attended and the show took place. The Nyahuye-wa-Soswe Council and community boards were still active and undertook a number of projects. Women still provided labour for these, although they were not represented on the council or the boards. Mrs Chitumba had frequent contact with tribal leaders – though she was not all that impressed with the support they were giving to women's activities.

By the end of 1977 all this had changed for the worse. The women's clubs in her work area had all but collapsed. Even the *ruwadzano* were reduced in number from fifteen to nine. 'Some women have been threatened to stop these meetings,' Mrs Chitumba said. 'Rumours are adding to their terror.' One of the four adult literacy groups stopped meeting 'due to political reasons'. Only the four 'societies' were still operating. Training activities, whether organized by the women themselves or by NGOs or Women Advisers, had ceased. The council was still able to run thirteen of the fifteen schools under its jurisdiction and had the destroyed Chigondo clinic rebuilt, but two beer-halls had to be closed under threat and the lighting plant and the water pump for a township was destroyed by saboteurs. The community boards were no longer operating. Mrs Chitumba's contact with tribal leaders ceased, as they no longer wanted to be seen with government workers. The chief removed himself to the Purchase Area. Mrs Chitumba now relied on home visits to remain in contact with the women in her work area. 'I used to make home visits three to four times a month. Now I make home visits every day. This is the only way field workers are operating now.'



Women Adviser Colleen Goto had also reported a decline in women's organized activities. There had been twenty-eight active women's clubs in her home area. Members had still attended courses before women's club shows and the annual show had taken place. However, towards the end

of the year, the homecraft clubs were markedly less active. 'Women are afraid of the terrorists,' Mrs Goto said. 'They are now concentrating more on activities in farming groups and on individual fowl-rearing projects.'

Then, in March 1977, the 'incident' happened. Mrs Goto came to see me in my office only some weeks later, when she was fit enough to travel. She had never referred to it in her monthly reports. Her official account, reproduced below, was written in my office.

Her children, Lillian, Lloyd and Langton, were twelve, ten and five years old. She did not say in her report was that she was three months pregnant at the time she was beaten.

St Anne's Mission
Wedza

Dear Mrs Chenaux-Repond

It was on the 17th of March 1977, in the morning at 6.30 a.m. when 15 terrorists came to my home. My children had left for school already.

The terrorists all had guns. 'You are both under Government, so cook sadza, tea and meat for us.' They talked to us very harshly and told me they would shoot us if we did not cook for them.

My husband is a councillor, that's why they said he was a Government worker.

The terrorists then left our home for a nearby hill. They said they would come back to our home to eat. While I was trying to cook, 17 soldiers came. The terrorists saw the soldiers coming and they ran away.

The soldiers had been following the footsteps of the terrorists. The soldiers asked us why the terrorists had come to our home. We told them the whole story, but they did not believe us.

They started to beat us from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. We were beaten so hard that it took us two weeks until we could walk again.

Both of us had severe swellings on the back and face and my husband on his ankles, where they had tied him. After two weeks we went to Wedza Clinic (24 miles) for treatment.

I was beaten by two of them with fists and kicked with boots while lying on the floor. The other 15 were hitting my husband with rifle butts. He was hanging down from his feet on a tree to which they had tied him. They took it in turns beating him.

They said they were beating us because we had cooked for the terrorists and they thought we had more information.

So we went to the DC's office on the 30th March to tell the DC the whole story. The DC said he would report the matter to the army. We haven't heard from him until now.

Yours faithfully
Mrs Goto
(Women Adviser)

Her spirit was not broken, but something broke within me. That is when my nightmares started. Every night I fell immediately into a dead sleep from being overtired. After a few hours, horrific dreams visited me in which I lived through the horrors of the violence which I saw only the results of, or only heard about, when I was going about my work. I woke up exhausted and emotionally drained. Insomnia followed.

Colleen Goto did not resign: she continued her work as best as she could. She went on maternity leave in mid-August. Her baby, Judith, was born on 4 September. Worse was to come when Judith was about eight months old.

The Gotos' elder daughter, Lillian Murwisi, does not remember the incident her mother reported in writing, though she does remember a one that happened sometime later. She recounted in 2013:

I only know what our parents told us, and half the time they would not give details: the incidents were traumatic, considered too painful for us children ... But much later, after the war, my mother would talk about them, in bits and pieces, again, mindful of the fact that it was very painful for all of us.

The security forces got to our village around 11 a.m. It is not clear on whose information they were acting ... My father had gone to check on the workers at the fields. My mother was at the homestead ... she was about four or five months pregnant with my sister ... When such an invasion happened, villagers would flee and someone passed by my father at the fields, fleeing the security forces, and told him that they had reached our place and that my mother could be in trouble. Indeed, she was. He found the soldiers at home, beating her up because she did not know where the *vakomana* were camped ... My father tried to rescue my mother ... this was typical of him. He pointed them in a wild direction, saying that maybe it was them he had met, heading in the opposite direction, on his way to the home.

It worked for that moment because the security forces left my mother and went in the direction my father had pointed, but they had left my mother bruised. Because my father had fabricated that story about having seen the *vakomana* going in one direction, after two days, the security forces came back for him! They took him to their camp at 'Chisasike' about 10 km from St Anne's Mission, on the Dorowa road. He was kept there, where they tortured him, beat him for information on the whereabouts of the *vakomana*. He was only released after two weeks, and when he finally came back ... I remember he could not sit

on his buttocks for another week; he would lie on his tummy while chatting to people ... he must have had sores from the beatings! He was also bruised all over ...

Word had been sent to school from our village, on the day of the invasion by the security forces ... all the school children stayed back at school. Word about my mother's beatings also got to us at school ... I could not wait to get back home to find out if my parents were OK ... After two weeks, we got home ...

I remember I was just too excited to see them to even think about what they had been through ... It is only much later, when I was grown up, well after my father had passed away, that I began to think through these events, how traumatic it had been, and I realized that I had bottled up all these things ... never wanted to relive them at the time because they would bring me nightmares. Maybe that is why my mother never really talked about it all afterwards ... I must have been an emotional wreck at the time!



I cannot remember what prompted my Provincial Commissioner's decision to 'save me from myself'. On 12 April 1977 Lionel Leach wrote to me:

I confirm our discussion where we agreed that whenever possible you would arrange to meet your women workers at district headquarters so as to bring your future itineraries within reasonable limits.

I accept that visits to PVs are necessary but request, again as discussed, that these be kept down to a minimum, please - certainly not more than two days a week.

A copy of this is going to the District Commissioners concerned. Please continue to work closely with them. The closer the liaison, in fact, the better the result will be and will, I know, result in you having to bear less of a burden. Your health and wellbeing are important to us all.

His copy to DCs Mudzi, Mtoko, Mrewa, Wedza, Goromonzi and Marandellas added:

For your information: I am trying to get Mrs Chenaux-Repond to bring her itinerary within limits that will save her from herself. She is at full stretch at present and something must give if she carries on in this fashion. I know you will give her all the help you can. In fact, seeing the women staff attached to you at

your headquarters would probably fit in well with your general running of the district and ensure closer co-operation.

I told Lionel Leach that the co-operation between me and the DCs, and that between the women fieldworkers and district staff, was as close as it would ever get. Had not DCs told me – and him – repeatedly, and sometimes in writing, that they had no staff to spare to work more closely with the women field staff? I was already regularly holding seminars at the district stations. I asked him, ‘What, specifically, has prompted this missive?’ but I got no answer. As for the ‘something must give’, I remained somewhat arrogantly convinced that I was strong and nothing would.



My PC was also agitating for Philippa and me to move to Daventry House in South Avenue, two blocks from the provincial offices, towards the railway station. Was our move the first sign of ‘trouble at province’? At the time I did not suspect anything. However, I asked Lionel Leach on what basis the decision had been made to move Philippa and me, rather than another officer or the accounts staff, out of the building. ‘It seemed logical that the only women [officers] should move out,’ he said. I did not see any logic in this except chauvinism. I pointed out the disadvantages of the separation – mainly that this would seriously hamper communication, because spontaneous discussions between him and me or between me and my fellow provincial officers, or with district staff visiting the province, would no longer take place. What should be a ‘provincial team of development officers’ was being split up; it would be more logical to move some of the accounting staff. My argument fell on deaf ears, and thus we moved on 1 April.

The advantage to Philippa and me was that in Daventry House we shared a huge office; we had been rather cramped in our former one. But the office was ugly: the floor was covered in red-and-black vinyl squares, and there were uncurtained windows high up that afforded no views. It was meant to be partitioned into two, but this never happened. I had asked for various items of furniture and equipment, including cupboards, large notice boards and a table and six chairs at which to hold fieldworkers’ seminars. I never got them. Thus, with the course materials that had to be bought and stored for skills training, and with Development Workers’ trunks that had by now to be assembled (on the floor), our new office soon began to look like a warehouse. As for the notice boards, I went to the industrial sites, ordered huge ones that covered one wall of the office, and had them installed at my own cost. On it were displayed

my programme plans and itineraries – in letters so huge that no one who entered the office could miss them!

Alas, in Daventry House, racial prejudices soon reared their ugly head. Ian Smith had started to dismantle the Land Tenure Act. The business area of central Salisbury had been opened to blacks. Some had opened businesses in the heart of Salisbury. Daventry House was a commercial building and soon small, black-owned businesses were moving in.

A number of Mashonaland Central staff were also accommodated in Daventry House, mostly male accounts people (white), but also a lady receptionist/switchboard operator and filing clerk (white). Mashonaland Central staff and Philippa and I shared tea-making facilities and thus cups, saucers and teaspoons. The commercial ladies (black) shared one of the ladies' toilets on the floor, to which they had the keys. The government ladies (two white, one black) shared the other. Sharing the 'two Ts' (toilets and tea cups) had never caused even a murmur in Harrobb House but was soon to become a problem in our new premises.

T-1: The toilets. Philippa recalls:

The first incident happened in your absence in the field. The toilet keys were hanging on the key rack in the switchboard operator's/receptionist's office. When I went to collect them I was informed that the visiting Development Workers and I were not allowed to use the ladies' toilet on the floor. We had to use the ones on the fourth floor (which were always open) or the public toilets at the nearby Rezende Street bus terminus.

There was a second incident of Philippa being refused they key when I was in the office. I was furious when I heard this. But I first tried to reason with Mrs X – I cannot remember her name. 'It is 1977,' I said. 'We are in the middle of a war and we are trying "to win the hearts and minds of the African people". I am afraid such attitudes won't win any hearts and minds.' I added: 'Both Philippa and our field staff know very well how to use a flush toilet and keep it clean.' I explained that Philippa had been to university and that the field staff were using flush toilets at Domboshawa. I told her how courteously and with what hospitality I was always received in African homes in the rural areas, in spite of the war. It was no use, and I am afraid I lost my temper.

Then I decided to enlist the support of the PCs. It was a Friday. I knew there was a PCs' conference at head office. I marched across to the Drill Hall (now Makombe Building), the seat of the Internal Affairs head office after its move out of Old Shell House. I decided to bide my time and wait in the anteroom to the conference room until the tea was wheeled in. Then I waited some more. As is predictable, the tea had its effect. It

was my luck that the PCs Mashonaland East, West and Central came out together. I waylaid them, told them about the problem that had arisen and asked them for their support.

The big men were evasive. 'It takes time to change attitudes, one of them said. 'You, of all people, working in community development, should know this!' 'I am not asking for an attitude change,' I said, ice cold with anger. 'I am demanding a behaviour change, and that can be very easily effected by the superior of said woman giving her an unequivocal command!' They just looked at each other, left me standing and marched off to the Gents.

So, on Saturday morning I went to the office and called an emergency locksmith. He changed the lock of one of the loos and I had a number of keys cut for it. On Monday morning I visited the 'commercial ladies' and gave them each a new key, stating that the original lock had been faulty and had had to be replaced. Then I went to the offending Internal Affairs woman and told her icily that from now on she could have her throne all to herself. From now on my staff and I would use the other.

T-2: The tea cups. Mrs X apparently also had a 'cup phobia' and had decreed that visiting Women Advisers and Development Workers should not be given tea. I 'discussed' this with her, too, somewhat acidly. I told her that if she ever cared to go into the tea kitchen she would no longer drink the government tea, considering how the cups were being washed, and that the messengers, in any case, always drank our left-over tea using 'our' government issue cups, including 'hers'. Evidently she did not know this, despite supervising the tea kitchen being actually part of her job.

Then I went to Serendipity, a shop specializing in pottery. I ordered four pottery mugs, two inscribed 'Philippa', and two, 'Maia'. (I still have one of mine to this day.) I bought a kettle, collected a spare teapot, a tray and some spare mugs for our visitors at home. We left the office tea club. From now on, Philippa and I bought and made our own tea.



More and serious trouble was brewing between me and Lionel Leach. I honestly did not know where all this had sprung from. I discussed these developments sometime later with the Provincial Agricultural Officer Mashonaland West, Melville Reid, who had become a friend and confidant. He maintained that the trouble stemmed from Piet Jordaan, our Provincial Agricultural Officer, who, for some reason, 'has it in for you'. Among agricultural staff, I was told, he made no secret of it. 'And we all know that Lionel Leach relies heavily on Piet Jordaan.'

Be that as it may, I was summoned to the PC's office. I was informed that every other provincial officer had testified to the fact that I was unco-operative, the 'odd woman out', that I needed to 'mend my ways'. Interestingly, when I look back on this, this complaint never appeared in my annual assessment report. I had never been shown a negative comment, always got my increment, so all the comments in that report must have been positive. I did not believe that my colleagues had classified me as 'unco-operative'. I thought that our interactions had been always been cordial, or at least courteous, though infrequent. However, as predicted, none had ever visited me in our Daventry House office.

I should, of course, have confronted my colleagues, but I decided to 'test the waters' differently. I gave each one a pretty invitation to a tea to celebrate my birthday, on a Friday afternoon, two weeks ahead. (My birthday was actually nowhere in sight.) I brought home-made goodies, including a birthday cake with candles. I borrowed the provincial cups and some chairs. 'Let's see who comes,' I said to Philippa, in whom I had confided. 'Those who see me as unco-operative will not come.'

On that Friday, one by one my colleagues trickled in, Dave Ford being the first, followed by Reg Pryce. At first, conversation was stifled. It seemed obvious that my 'being the odd one out' had, indeed, been discussed. But in time everybody loosened up and we actually had a pleasant, relaxed afternoon. Everybody came except Lionel Leach and Piet Jordaan.

In my arrogance, I now despised my fellow officers. None had broached the issue with me. I decided that they were behaving like primary-school kids. When children of that age know that a teacher 'does not like' a particular child in his or her class and picks on her, no one wants to play with her during break. 'If I do, the teacher could do the same to me,' is the child's logic. I was 'too busy' to let it bother me any further. In retrospect this was a grave mistake, for the trouble was by no means over. Ominous clouds were gathering.

I was more deeply shocked at the trouble that was brewing between Miss Wilson and me some time later, after my acting appointment. We had gone together on a visit to Mudzi and Mtoko district stations in my own car. On our way back, she attacked me verbally, virtually all the way back to Salisbury. Nothing I had been doing lately was right, nor was my attitude to her or to any other person in the Internal Affairs hierarchy. I cannot remember now what her accusations were specifically. Only that I was deeply hurt rather than offended.



WGL continued to provide courses for women from 'sensitive areas', as they had done in 1975 and 1976. During the first six months of the year, they reserved three one-week courses on 'running playgroups' and a course on 'how to occupy school-leavers', and FAWC ran a leadership course. The Women Advisers, Doriene and I continued to do the recruiting, which was not easy for the Women Advisers as circumstances in Mudzi, Mtoko, Mrewa districts were so fluid. The task, however, gave them focus.

I asked WGL whether they would be prepared to accept Development Workers and Women Advisers on their playgroup courses. Not only did the workers need training to advise mothers in the running of playgroups, but in some difficult PVs and CVs they initiated and sometimes even ran such groups themselves. While this was definitely not part of their job description, I condoned it where indicated by circumstances.

In April 1977, I was able to send Women Adviser Dinah Nyakabau from Nyamara PV in Mrewa District and ten Development Workers from Mudzi, Mtoko and Mrewa districts to a one-week playgroup course. They brought seven mothers and a pre-school helper with them, including Chief Chirinda's wife and a headman's wife from Mrewa. Participation was more heavily weighted towards staff than had been intended, but this could not be helped, owing to the reluctance of mothers to move from their PVs and CVs. The course was theoretical – with a few children present at times, though – but put much emphasis on the difference between learning through free play as distinct from formal learning at school.

A letter dated 5 April 1977 from training officer Voy Youngleson (who did this work without pay on an entirely voluntary basis) stated WGL's motives for running courses for 'sensitive areas':

By running these courses we are able to show that, although we have lost touch with our members because of the present situation, we still care and are interested in making contact where we can.

It also posed a few questions:

The WGL playgroup course is essentially a mother-involvement course. The whole course is geared to encouraging mothers to recognize and appreciate the importance of pre-school learning through play and her need to be involved in this training. Therefore, it would seem to me that the participants of these courses should be mothers accompanied by DWs. The DW will then know what it is that the mothers will want to implement when they get back and will be able to support them. I know you have tried to do just that but prevailing circumstances have prevented it.

The DWs told us last week that the mothers in the Protected Villages relied on them to look after the children while they, the mothers, worked in the fields. It would seem, too, that the mothers felt that they were paid workers and that this was part of their job. I am not fully in the picture as to the needs and difficulties of the Protected Villages and would like to ask you the following questions:

1. Is looking after the children part of the DWs' work? If this is so then perhaps what is needed is a course for DWs on how to occupy children and not the type of course we run?
2. Is it quite impossible for the mothers to become involved in the play centre?
3. What sort of supportive role can we play? Perhaps providing Course 2, which is for supervisors and helpers?

Thank you for doing the recruiting for us. Our next course starts on 1 May 1977. The Salvation Army has already taken up 5 places. Do you think will be able to recruit 15?

Voy's questions and comments were valid. In more ideal circumstances, once mothers had expressed the need for a pre-school, they would have been helped to take on responsibility for it from the start – first, by forming committees to run and finance it and by advising them on organizational issues. Then pre-school (playgroup) helpers should be selected by the mothers and sent for training. Mother-involvement in the educational process itself – common in the playgroups run by middle-class white women in the Salisbury suburbs – would have been the last goal. It was difficult to achieve in a 'peaceful rural area' let alone in a PV, partly because the very notion of pre-school education – as distinct from keeping the children safe in a playgroup and freeing the mothers for their many other tasks – was new to them.

We also had to be aware that rural women were in fact 'working mothers'. In the PVs, many had to walk long distances to the fields. When the gates were opened, they had to stay in the fields all day to make up for lost time. Walking there was often not physically safe. Also, the women were not allowed to take food to the fields, thus the day was too long for small children, who had to be left behind in the PV, often with inadequate supervision.

However, functioning as pre-school helpers and running the playgroups themselves were definitely not part of a Development Worker's job – and even less so of a Women Adviser's. I condoned it at the beginning, because in some circumstances looking after the village women's children

was the main or only expressed need that the Development Workers could respond to – or the main way in which they could gain acceptance. Women Adviser Nyakabau, in Nyamara PV of Uzumba TTL, worked in such difficult circumstances and isolation that for months her main occupation was to dispense medicines (which she was able to do because I had sent her for Red Cross training) and to run a pre-school group. In between she made home visits to show interest in individual women, hopefully ‘planting seeds’ for future developmental action. During such home visits she was able to enthuse two men to cut poles, ten women to cut thatching grass, and some other parents to build a shelter to protect the children from the sun and rain.



**Women Adviser
Dinah Nyakabau
gives children their
mid-morning high-
protein drink at the
pre-school shelter
built by parents
at Nyamara PV,
Uzumba TTL**

My next planned step, therefore, was to disabuse the mothers of the idea that running playgroups was part of the Development Worker's job and to encourage them to choose pre-school helpers who could then be trained by WGL in ‘Course 2’, which Voy had mentioned. I hoped I would achieve this by 1978.

For the May course, I was able to send Women Advisers Mary Chijaka and Bertha Chibisa from Mudzi and Idah Gurupira from Mtoko, who brought six mothers with her. I still had to give places reserved for Mashonaland East to Mashonaland Central – which I did, of course, with pleasure. Doriennne recruited five mothers from Mount Darwin District. It seems that conditions in ‘Doriennne's PVs’ were more settled at this particular time, as she managed to fill a number of other courses.

Various voluntary organizations were also concerned about the nutritional needs of young children in the PVs/CVs, apart from their

physical supervision and educational needs. Thus WGL called a meeting on 3 May 1977 to discuss the provision of feeding schemes for pre-school children in these villages. The following organizations were represented: WGL, FAWC, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, the Salvation Army, Catholic Social Services Development, the Red Cross, and the Rhodesia Council of Social Welfare.

A few of these organizations were already involved to some extent in some PVs, by providing milk powder or *mahewu* (a high-protein drink manufactured by Nutresco). Their efforts needed to be co-ordinated to avoid overlaps and 'underlaps'. Some provided help in kind free of charge; others required communities to make a small financial contribution. Still others offered limited funds to help with schemes implemented by other organizations. Mr G. Leeds, head of the Freedom from Hunger Campaign, outlined his organization's scheme that was being implemented in conjunction with the Ministry of Internal Affairs: 'A group of forty children in a PV whose parents collected 30¢ per child per month would receive Nutresco *mahewu* (in powder form), to be distributed by Internal Affairs staff, FHC funding the rest of the cost and transport.' The Red Cross provided free powdered milk, distributed either by the 'nurses' manning the few Red Cross posts that we had been able to establish to date, or by Development Workers. Others outlined their currently still 'ad hoc' approach.

The organizations represented stated that, to achieve nationwide coverage, the full parameters of the situation needed to be known: How many PVs/CVs? How many children under the age of five? What staff or groups would be available to receive and distribute the protein drinks? They also regretted that, although they had been willing to assist for some time, no request had been made by the ministry for the use of their resources or services. Thus it was decided to write to the PC (Community Development) at Internal Affairs head office and to invite him to a meeting to discuss how assistance could best be given.

I do not know whether a co-ordinated approach was ever achieved. However, our Development Workers and the trainees manning the Red Cross posts were involved in reconstituting the milk powder distributed by the International Red Cross. We briefed them on the feeding schemes proposed by Freedom from Hunger Campaign and asked them to pass that information on to the communities of the villages in which they worked.



The innocence of my own youngest child made my heart ache, as did the suffering of the children in the war areas. Yvonne, now eleven years old, had started to save her pocket money to buy copper plaques with inscriptions idolizing our brave men in the security forces. Gradually, she decorated the walls of her room with them. To her, the fathers, brothers, cousins and uncles of her friends were heroes, noble and brave; they were protecting her family from violence and evil. Buying the copper plaques was her way of supporting them. I did not have the heart to disillusion the child with facts such as the Goto incident and others. Yes, war does bring out the best in some men – carrying a wounded fellow soldier at the risk of their own lives, for example. It also brings out the worst in others, such as the torture and killing of an enemy prisoner or civilians.

How could I build bridges – just one little bridge – between the children on both sides of the war? How could I plant a few seeds that could grow into a recognition that politicians may cause wars – wars in which children's fathers, uncles, brothers, cousins fight for a 'just cause', on both sides; in which fathers, uncles, brothers, cousins kill and are killed, on both sides – but that children are not 'the enemy', that children on both sides of the front are innocent victims?

Eventually I had an idea. Children Yvonne's age were just the right age to be enthused to make toys for the pre-school groups that we were helping women form in the Keeps. I presented my idea to Mr J. Siney, the headmaster of Yvonne's school, Alfred Beit School in Mabelreign. He gave me his full support, and on 15 April 1977, I was allowed to give two talks to two groups of children assembled in the hall – first all the Standard 5s, then all the Standard 4s (Yvonne's age group).

The assembly hall was packed with eager 11-year-old and 12-year-old girls and boys. The structure of my talk was simple: What is a 'Protected Village'? What does it look like? A typical day in the life of a small child living there – a good day, a bad day. What *you* could do to make life better, a bit more joyful, for small children in a Protected Village. I told them about the pre-school groups that mothers and older girls were forming there, but that these groups had absolutely no toys or equipment, not even paper, glue or colouring pencils. I showed them samples of toys they could make to equip these pre-schools.

Both children and teachers were enthusiastic, so a project was born that engaged all Standard 4s in the school for an entire school holiday and term, under the guidance of Mrs Bennett, one of Yvonne's teachers. During the holidays the children collected materials, and during the arts and craft lessons (and even in other periods) of the next term they all made toys. The teachers knew exactly what was suitable for which age group.

The children made toys to have fun with, toys to love, toys to cuddle, and they made an astonishing range of educational toys. There were picture books. There were matching cards, sorting trays, puzzles, memory games, dominos, sewing cards. Even cloth books with which you could learn to do up buttons, bows, zips and shoelaces. There were nurse sets, complete with (needle-less) syringes and stethoscopes and unbreakable medicine bottles. Sets of toys were packed into donated cardboard suitcases, as the teachers knew that the embryo pre-schools would have nowhere to store them.



Children in Nyamara PV playing with toys (above) and playing 'clinic' in nurses' uniforms (below) made by children at Alfred Beit School



During this time I also made a blunder. Knowing that the school would have difficulty in finding pictures depicting Africans or African village life for the picture books they were making, I wrote, I thought, to the editor of *Moto* magazine (which had been banned in 1974), asking whether its Catholic publisher, Mambo Press, had back copies of the mission magazine *Wendekreis*, which carried magnificent such pictures and asking if I could buy them. I explained that they would be used to make picture books for children in PVs. I did not get a reply for weeks. Then I received a letter from Father Paul Egli, explaining that, since he was in prison, it had taken some time for the letter to reach him and for him to pass it on to the right person.

Although I knew the name of the priest in charge of Mambo Press, Fr Plangger, I had addressed my letter to a name that must have subconsciously played on my mind. Fr Egli, of Berejena Mission in Chibi TTL, Victoria Province, had been sentenced in January to five years' imprisonment for 'failing to report the presence of terrorists'. It was clear during the trial that Fr Egli, a Swiss national (like Fr Plangger), sympathized with the guerrillas' cause for majority rule and had little sympathy for the behaviour of the security forces in the area. In his seized diary he had referred to the police as 'the SS Police' and to the army as 'the SS'. He had not been contrite over his 'failure to report'.

I received a quantity of *Wendekreis* free of charge, and there were no apparent repercussions from officialdom for my correspondence with a 'traitor'. Had they had ever even noticed? Or had they, and were they now watching me more closely?

The South African diplomatic mission gave me masses of back copies of *South African Panorama*. Both publications had plenty of pictures suitable for rural African children. My mother, in Switzerland, also made the most beautiful picture books. She put them together so lovingly and meticulously that I used them as sample books from that time on when I was training.

Chatting informally to an acquaintance who was involved with the Girls' Brigade of the Presbyterian Church, I received an invitation to give a talk similar to the one I had given to the Alfred Beit School. As a result, the Girl's Brigade, too, engaged in a project to make toys for children in PVs. I was overjoyed at this show of goodwill in the midst of war. I shared my bounty received from the Girls' Brigade with other officers.



Philippa and Bazibi's wedding

Traditional formalities having been completed and part of the *lobola* handed over, Philippa and Bazibi's marriage was to be solemnized at St Matthew's Church, Rusape, on Saturday 21 May 1977 and legally registered. I was deeply touched when Rolf and I received an invitation to their wedding and reception. At the same time I was very concerned that the presence of white people could have repercussions for the family. Thus I asked Philippa: 'Do you really want to have two white people at your wedding? Could it not create difficulties for your families, considering we are in the middle of a war? Are you sure this has been fully discussed?'

Philippa was adamant that both Bazibi and she wanted us to come and that there was no problem with her family who, after all, had sent us the invitation. In fact, Bazibi and Philippa had invited three other white friends – Angela and Graham Cheater and Eleanor Coutts, but they could not make it.

I was torn between anticipation and apprehension. We went nevertheless, and Rolf and I both greatly enjoyed the white wedding. It was, of course, an all-day affair: the marriage was solemnized in the church at 8.30 in the morning and the reception started at 1.00 in the afternoon in Vengere Hall. We were treated most cordially by everybody, and no one seemed to be particularly worried about our presence.

We were intrigued with the protocol in respect of wedding presents, which I had witnessed before and have since. They were all placed on a table, visible to all. A specially appointed Master of Ceremonies held each present up in the air in turn and announced the name of the giver to the assembly. Everyone clapped enthusiastically, admiring each present, however modest or lavish. Then the present was recorded in a book. The same was done if the gift was in cash.

As Rolf and I said goodbye to Philippa's relatives, one of her aunts did not release my hand, and very discretely led me aside. She still did not let go of my hand. She looked steadily into my eyes and said: 'You are older and wiser than Philippa. You are an experienced married woman. You have a senior position in government and Philippa respects you. Will you teach Philippa how to be a proper wife?'

I was overwhelmed by the task about to be thrust upon me. It also occurred to me that my idea of suitable behaviour in a young wife might not entirely coincide with those of Philippa's aunt. On the other hand I could not extradite myself from her earnest gaze. So I said, 'I will try.'

Given their own financial state and the country's security situation, Philippa and Bazibi did not go on honeymoon at this time. On Monday we were back in our respective offices.



From 18 May to 13 June, I acted as Senior CD Officer (Women) in Miss Wilson's absence out of the country. At head office I interacted mainly with a Mr Wilson (PC Community Development, but no relation to my superior) and my former PC Bob Woollacott (Deputy Secretary, Community Development).

There were parochial human resources matters to attend to. Two Women Advisers had been pulled from the operational area months before and were stationed at head office rather being under-employed. I organized for Mrs Chibumbu to learn to operate the switchboard, which freed the regular operator to overhaul the filing system. I made her cut out numerous dressmaking patterns from samples I supplied, to be used in PVs. Mrs Muzavazi was assigned to messenger service and set to knitting samples. She was not, in my opinion, great Women Adviser material – the only one I ever met of whom I thought this – and as soon as I had her occupied eight hours a day, she fell ill, but did not bring a clinic's or doctor's certificate to qualify for sick leave. I left this for Miss Wilson to sort out. Had it been up to me, I would have stationed Mrs Chibumbu, who was competent, in Seke Township to support Mrs Guzha and to have her more appropriately employed.

A new skills trainer, Miss Ellen Maphosa, started duty while I was in the hot seat. I assigned her to make various samples, using materials we had not used before, e.g. from *shinda* (cotton yarn) and hessian, tobacco and cotton baling twine, and strips made from discarded plastic bags. I also taught her how to keep time-and-motion records and assigned her to keep them when making the samples. Even experienced skills trainers could never tell me how long it took to make a specific article, which made planning course programmes more difficult for me than it should have been.

More significantly for the Section, several tragedies were brewing in respect of officers, involving Alison Stewart (Manicaland), Dorianne Graham-Jolly (Mashonaland Central) and Verity Cubitt (Head Office). Alison Stewart – who was much my senior in terms of government service, although she had joined the Section at about the same time as I did – had first acted in Miss Wilson's place but asked to be relieved of this duty on account of her daughter's illness. Indeed, her daughter died of cancer not long afterwards, leaving three young children behind. Alison and her son-in-law had never got on well, and he now effectively cut her out of his and her grandchildren's life. It was a terrible blow for her, as she lost both her daughter and access to her grandchildren.

My best friend Dorianne Graham-Jolly was in a 'poor state of health', my 'Diary of Events' says. As a matter of fact, she had become an alcoholic;

I had known this for months. Unable to bear the violence she witnessed in the field, she had turned to alcohol more and more. For a long time she was able to hide it. She lived alone. We CD officers travelled a great deal, so when she did not come to work at the provincial office it was not particularly noticeable. I observed that if she was not at work when I had expected her to be, her telephone at home was permanently engaged. Worried about her, I visited her at home a few times during the day and found her drunk with the phone off the hook. Trying to protect her, I kept this to myself. But now others began to notice.

Penny Ross, for example, had known for a long time. She told me firmly that I must take action, that it was my responsibility to make Dee face her condition, as she respected me. I tried several times but was met with denial. I experienced her withdrawal from me as abandonment. Sometime before, Ken Brown had stopped giving Dorianne flying lessons when he flew her to PVs. Dorianne told me that she had suddenly developed vertigo. Then, when I made an impromptu visit to her home one morning, I found Ken Brown there. As he came to the door and our eyes met, we each knew that the other knew. His demeanour also confirmed what I had suspected for some time – Ken Brown and Dorianne had fallen in love.

By now Bob Woollacott, who was a family friend on account of her father having been a fellow DC, had noticed that Dorianne was in a 'stress-related poor state of health'. This was discussed between him, Mr Wilson and myself, without alcohol being mentioned. I did not know whether Bob Woollacott had any suspicions. The men decided that both the ministry and Mrs Graham-Jolly would benefit if she stayed at home for two weeks and wrote up the still-outstanding annual report for 1976 and the monthly reports for the first half of 1977. When this was discussed with the two PCs Mashonaland Central and West, the latter recommended that Dorianne be sent on leave, to be counted as sick leave. She did take sick leave, but her 'stress-related poor state of health' did not improve.

In respect of the many reports that were outstanding, Bob Woollacott said that he had read many of Dorianne's past reports and mine and that he found them highly informative. He had made various head office staff read them and could he please retain Miss Wilson's file a bit longer. He added that it was greatly regretted at head office that neither Mrs Graham-Jolly nor Mrs Chenux-Repond were submitting reports any more. Our 'laxity' was pardoned, however, as he acknowledged that we were both grossly overworked.

Perhaps I should also have asked for some leave, to be counted as sick leave. I knew only too well that I was under extreme stress myself, but I could not admit it. The effects of the violence I witnessed weighed

heavily on me. I just continued to reiterate that I was overworked and could not write monthly reports, and worked even harder. The field staff in operational areas needed every bit of support they could get.

Verity Cubitt had recently been interviewed and accepted for the Section. I dealt with her assumption-of-duty forms. Doriene and I took her out for lunch. The fact that all three of us had at some stage worked in the sociology department of the university gave us immediate common ground. We both liked her immensely and thought her eminently suitable for the job. We certainly expected her to be appointed to a province shortly. When they met her, our colleagues also welcomed Verity's appointment.

Bob Woollacott put me in charge of Verity's induction training. It says in my notes, however, that attempts to station Miss Cubitt with any PCDOW for a field placement failed owing to Mrs Stewart's daughter's illness, Mrs Graham-Jolly's state of health, Miss de Chelain's state of health, and Miss Robbins's forthcoming transfer – which, incidentally, never took place. So, I drafted an 'Induction Training Manual', a checklist with the help of which a new officer could take some of her initial training in hand herself.

A fortnight's continuous field-placement with an experienced officer, such as I had had with Arlene Fullard, would have been ideal but was not possible at the moment. There was also much background reading to do, circulars and forms for her to study, visits for her to make to voluntary organizations in order to familiarize herself with their programmes and modes of operation; at least WGL, the YFC, the YWCA, the Red Cross Society, the Savings Development Movement and ALOR could and should be visited. I made the necessary appointments and Verity was briefed, together with Philippa Mundangepfupfu, on their objectives, structure and mode of operation. In addition, I managed to station Verity for three days with Betty Mtero, who was running a Show Organization Course at Wankie. Adaire Robbins invited her to Gwelo for 20–24 June, where she was running an HEDs' initial training course. Numerous appointments with officers in relevant government departments took place.

Thinking that Verity would be appointed to Mashonaland Central, a DC stationed at head office was detailed by Bob Woollacott to look at the office situation at the congested Mashonaland provincial offices and to make recommendations. By the time Wyn Wilson came back, Verity had absorbed a great deal of the Section's induction training.

For reasons that were never clear to any of us officers, and to our great regret, Wyn Wilson, on her return, suddenly turned against Verity Cubitt. She was never appointed. In fact it was recommended to her that she resign. Verity, today, thinks that 'the ministry' did not like her recent

association with the university and her friendship with some 'subversive elements' there, and that she therefore did not pass the final security check. Dorianne and I, however, felt that Wyn Wilson had also developed a personal antipathy towards her. By now we had realized that she could be very vindictive. We were very sorry indeed to lose Verity. Looking at the work she did later in various capacities elsewhere, we knew we had been right in our assessment of her suitability.



I did deal with some interesting national matters during my acting appointment. In most operational areas of Mashonaland, clinics formerly run by councils had collapsed, or the clinic buildings were outside the PVs, and many nurses had left the service. The people in the PVs needed accessible basic medical services. Thus the idea of establishing first-aid posts in PVs, manned by 'Red Cross Trainees' had been born. Both Dorianne and I had lobbied for such a scheme. A draft circular announcing the introduction by Internal Affairs of a 'National Red Cross Centre Scheme' was already in existence. Mr Wilson was detailed to clear it with Ministry of Health, and I to clear it with the Director of the Red Cross Society.

An 'Early Childhood Education Steering Committee' had been instituted, in which representatives of various interested organizations, including the ministries of education, were involved. I attended some of their meetings. A South African broadcasting and television team visited, wanting to film 'women's activities', including those in PVs. I deferred any decisions in this respect for Miss Wilson's return.

I had been hoping to have official reasons to visit my colleagues in other provinces during my acting appointment because we normally had so little contact. For this, there was simply no time, as my schedule was too tight. I also never got away from provincial matters in Mashonaland East during my acting period. Indeed, I had arranged for a series of nine one-day seminars for Women Advisers in my office during the period 25 May to 9 June; I handed these over to Philippa. The primary purpose had been to go over their project plans with them, to discuss their monthly reports, to discuss work challenges, and to decide on where I needed to get involved in the field. The advantage of Philippa stepping in was that it gave her the opportunity to get to know the Women Advisers better. She coped well and enjoyed the experience. Verity was able to join her some of the time.

In May 1977 I passed the Internal Affairs 'Shona Customs and Administration' examination. Passing customary-law examinations was

compulsory for promotion to ADC, as was the Shona or Ndebele language examination. DCs also had a judicial role. Civil cases that could not be resolved at the chiefs' courts were referred to the DC's court. Thus DCs had to be conversant with customary law as well as with relevant statute law, some aspects of which superseded customary law. There was nothing in the regulations to say that only administrative staff could sit them.

Debbie Enslin, who had passed the exam with marks in the 90th percentiles, had told me that it was 'a breeze' and she did not know what all the fuss was about. 'Besides,' she said, 'you know so much about Shona customary law already, you will only have to swot up the statutory law.' She was exaggerating somewhat! The syllabus covering statute law encompassed aspects of the 1969 Constitution, the African Marriages Act, the African Affairs Act, the Africans Identification and Registrations Act, the African Councils Act, and others. For customary law I studied the only two worthwhile books on the subject then in existence: Bullock's *Mashona Laws and Customs* and the much newer – and, in my opinion, better – *Shona Customary Law* by J.F. Holleman.² This examination was one of the most useful ones for my work that I had ever passed.



On Friday 27 May, still in my acting appointment, I got word from Mtoko district office that Chitekwe PV had been partially burned down by terrorists on 20 May, that the house and outbuildings of Women Adviser Norah Chitekwe had been destroyed, and that she and her family had been given temporary accommodation in Mtoko. Similarly, Makosa CV was partially burned down under 'fairly heavy attack' on 22 May. We had only just stationed four Development Workers there in April.

Then the Senior District Officer Mudzi called to say that the Mudzi Development Workers needed moral support and advice on how to proceed with their work, considering the difficult security situation. I made arrangements to visit both burned-down villages on 14 June, to visit Women Adviser Chitekwe and Development Workers Rennie Njodzi, Winnie Mashonganyika, Queenie Chipaumire and Mildred Chidzungu.

Widowed Mrs Chitekwe was at the time responsible for eight children – five of her own (aged 22, 20, 18, 15 and 10; the eldest, Netsai, was already in Gwelo at the teacher training college and 15-year-old Gertrude was at Nyamuzuwe Secondary School in Mtoko TTL during term time) and

² Charles Bullock, *Mashona Laws and Customs* (Salisbury: Argus, 1913); J.F. Holleman, *Shona Customary Law: With Reference to Kinship, Marriage, the Family and the Estate* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1952).

The burning of Chitekwe PV, 20 May 1977

Report by Women Adviser Chitekwe

Friday the 20th May at about 9.30p.m. when I was asleep with my children my daughter woke me up and told me there was noise outside. I said that perhaps it was people from a beer-drink. Few minutes later there was light over the Eastern side of the PV. My son was sleeping with two other little boys in our big house and I went to wake him up. Soon we all went out following the crowds.

I was carrying my old mother-in-law on my back.

On our way we met three armed men. They ordered us to move downwards the gate way.

We found the gate open. Being so frightened I couldn't imagine the whole picture. There was smoke all over. All were moving from the PV.

We walked to the school. After an hour I heard some shooting.

I lost so many items. My big house and my two huts were burnt. I was very worried with my two-week-old chicks and my hens. I missed [lost] six. I missed all my books for work and foodstuff.

Saturday morning we returned to the PV and found the Keep commander waiting at the gate with the army. We were told to sit down. People were asked questions and were beaten. We were locked inside the burnt PV. It was difficult to cook anything because the flames were still on. In the evening some people tried to escape over the fence.

Sunday morning we also experienced hardship. The DAs showed the people some clothes they found near the fence. The beating started again. They at last found the people concerned.

On Monday I went to the DC. I explained my position and the situation. The Senior District Officer kindly arranged a temporary accommodation. I then returned to the PV.

On Tuesday I moved to Mtoko [with my children and my mother-in-law].

Wednesday a tragic thing happened again. All food [crops] still under harvesting was burnt. All huts burnt and windows and doors broken at the old [brick] homes by the DAs and army.

People are now just mixed up and everything is at a standstill.

I for one having the burden on my shoulders and being a widow I am so worried with my future.

Lost items:

2 bags maize	1 big coat	1 frying pan
30 bags munga	1 jersey	1 dish
1 bag layers concentrate	1 shawl	4 plates
1 bag chick mash	2 trousers	1 curtain
6 hens	1 shirt	
demonstration material	4 dresses	
1 sleeping bag	1 uniform	



Women Adviser Chitekwe's home burned down

three of her divorced brother's (one of them aged 13, the others 10-year-old twins), as well as her aged mother-in-law. She was glad to be stationed in Mtoko for some months. Knowing her children to be safe, including from being recruited as *mujibas* or *chimbwidos*, gave her the emotional strength not only to work in Mtoko township but to visit the villages of her work area, encouraging women to make a new start in their (once again) drastically changed and difficult environment.

Her youngest daughter, Beth, recalled:

Mum must have had a premonition about what was to come. When the PV was burned she had sent us younger children (Christopher, Clara and me) to her brother in Salisbury for the holidays. When we returned back to Mtoko, Mum had been allocated a temporary house in Chinzanga village in Mtoko township. I understand that when the PV was burned people were sheltered at Chitekwe School for the night. Some went back to their rural homes but were told to go back to the PV. There is a family joke that Granny insisted on being carried by Mum because her back was softer [because she was a bigger woman] than her own daughter Tete Chona's, who was rather slim. She did not want Chona's bones pricking her.

Within less than two months Women Adviser Chitekwe had found her feet again. She wrote to me on 4 July 1977:

I am getting on very well. The book about the animal farm helped me a lot. 'I am going to work harder each day.'

Congratulate me: I made a great achievement. I helped women in Mtoko township to find a very good suitable place for their playgroup. The DC gave us a very big room which used to be for chiefs. You shall one day see the place.

The four Development Workers who had been lingering in Charewa base camp for so long, and had also worked for a month in the Mtoko township, were moved to Makosa PV on 4 April 1977. Within six weeks the village 'came under attack' and was burned down on 22 May. I visited them on 14 June.

The conditions that Mildred Chidzungu, Queenie Chipaumire, Winnie Mashonganyika and Rennie Njodzi were supposed to work in were most depressing. The inhabitants of Makosa were obviously preoccupied with rebuilding their homes, but even without the disaster of the fire they were in no mood to respond to the Development Workers. As all four testified: 'The people are politically minded and hate government workers. They take us as "women DAs" or informers. The women won't talk to us about their problems. When we ask them questions they think we are investigating them.'

The Development Workers made many home visits trying to find out what interest groups had existed in the area before people were moved. The women pretended there had not been any. Former leaders and members of such groups had gone underground. The workers dropped ideas about women's groups and savings clubs, possible projects, etc., but the women said that they had no money and, anyway, while they were 'in prison' they could not do anything. The fact that DSAs treated villagers harshly, especially after the fire, did not help.

I managed to conduct an official introduction of the Development Workers to the people on 21 June. The headmaster of the local primary school, Mr Chaparadza, whom I had met in Mtoko on 15 June, kindly grouped the people. This made a big difference, as they trusted him. I had the following agenda:

- Express empathy with the fact that the village was burned and that people have to rebuild.
- Introduce the Development Workers to the people.
- Explain their role.
- Listen to problems and needs people wish to express.
- Explain the possible distribution of 'Red Cross Milk' to children below school age.
- Explain the possibility of a school feeding scheme [subsidized by the Freedom from Hunger Campaign]
- Explain playgroups for pre-school children.

The Development Workers said later that there was a marked improvement in the people's attitude towards them after my visit: 'people started getting used to us'. Some of the women became friendlier and started asking questions about playgroups.

Things improved further when Women Adviser Chitekwe took the two Development Workers under her wings. (Winnie Mashonganyika and Rennie Njodzi had been transferred to Chimoyo base camp in July). Mrs Chitekwe was known to some of the women of Makosa from pre-war days and was trusted. Her letter told me of new beginnings:

13 August 1977

Dear Mrs Chenaux

I thought to write you though you are still on holiday.

I had a nice working week in Makosa from the 8th with the Development Workers. The Headmaster helped quite a lot. He was quite co-operative.

We managed to start a playgroup. We had 27 the first day. The number increased the second day, we had 57, 96 third day and 112 the fourth day.

I was glad the people are now convinced that Development Workers are not what they thought.

I also left the Development Workers ready to start a club for girls. About four girls came to ask me about having a club. I discussed this with the Development Workers and urged them to start with the few who came also some wanted Red Cross [training]. I am now believing what you said. I didn't know things would work a bit normal. I'll continue working harder each day like the mule.

Thank you for your helpful advices plus the encouragement you give me.

We have started working with [District Officer] Miss Adams. She is a wonderful worker. I had a long discussion with her. Mrs Gurupira was with her last week when I was in Makosa.

Is it possible for you to allocate one Dev. Worker though they still do not have a committee in their playgroup at the course you have organised for play group supervisors or Mrs Gurupira or myself so that as we are starting we may not be left behind.

With best wishes. I hope you had a nice holiday.

Yours sincerely,

N. Chitekwe (W/A)

The Development Workers now could start a playgroup, but they had to run it themselves. It was a beginning. If the women trusted them enough to entrust them with their small children, we could build on this later.

I was indeed glad that I had been able to send them on the one-week WGL pre-school course!



In the meantime, after a brief holiday with my family, I returned to field work in Chiota TTL (Marandellas). I travelled in my own car, laden with the demonstration toys and apparatus I had assembled by this time. I had received a letter from the headmaster of Furamera School, near Mahusekwa, telling me of the pre-school that had been started and housed in his school, and asking if I knew of any organization that could donate toys and equipment. In my response, I said:

Lack of toys and equipment is a problem for all pre-school groups that are started as a community project. However, it is the type of project that offers a golden opportunity for all who are concerned about the welfare of pre-school children to become involved – in particular the following:

- the pre-school committee
- parents of children attending the pre-school group
- Grade Seven pupils of the school to which the pre-school is attached.

There is a great variety of educational toys that can be made by Grade Seven children (as a community service project, possibly during art and needlework sessions) and also by parents of pre-school children.

There are two groups who have become actively involved in makings such toys and equipment for pre-school groups in Protected Villages in the operational districts. These are:

- the Girls' Brigade
- a European Primary School (Standard Fours).

The children involved are of the same age or even younger than the Grade Sevens of your school. They have proved to be perfectly capable of making much of the toys and equipment I have suggested to them.

I went out to Furamera school (in Mrs Shekede's work area) in June, armed with my list of suitable toys and equipment. I learned another lesson about what is and what is not possible. Teachers, pre-school 'teachers' (hitherto untrained), members of the committee overseeing the pre-school, the Women Advisers and Grade Seven pupils were assembled in the hall in which I had set out the educational toys. I asked them to view the toys before I gave my talk. I discovered with dismay that neither parents, nor teachers, nor the children had the faintest idea of what use the educational toys – including sorting trays, 'shapes into shapes' boxes, number and picture dominos, puzzles, memory games – could be put to.

None of the mothers present had ever assembled a puzzle, nor actually ever seen one.

I encouraged the children each to take a toy and play with it. In contrast to little children, whose curiosity leads them to explore and soon 'get the hang of' each educational toy, these older children were inhibited by the fear that they might not do the right thing and thus 'look stupid'. Even the teachers did not appear to know what the toys and apparatus might be for. I gave a short talk explaining how intellectual and physical development (fine motor skills) can be developed through play. How easy it had been to enthuse teachers and children at Alfred Beit School and the leaders and members of the Girls Brigade! Here, any attempt to involve school children and parents in making educational toys would have to be preceded by much training.

I stayed for several hours longer than I had intended, teaching Grade Sevens to play with sewing cards, assembling puzzles, etc. We had fun, but my mission had not been accomplished. I left patterns for dolls for the women's group and diagrams of outdoor equipment (such as swings and jungle gyms) which fathers with carpentry skills could possibly make. Above all, I left addresses of organizations that could be contacted to give training to mothers of pre-school children and possibly to the pre-school 'teachers'. I made one more similar attempt, responding to the request of the headmaster of a school in Marondera, and had similar results.

Later, it became less comfortable to travel to Chiota TTL in my own car. Mainly in the southern region – under Chief Nyandoro's jurisdiction and Naomi Shekede's work area – mines were being laid by the insurgents. A Police Support Unit vehicle detonated a landmine near Nyandoro's kraal. Two passenger busses detonated landmines to the north, in Louisa Nhavira's area under Chief Chiota's jurisdiction.

Late in June, I once again pleaded with Wyn Wilson to have skills trainer Maphosa stationed with me at Daventry House to make specific samples of sewed and crocheted articles, craft articles, and toys for pre-school groups under my direction. Skills trainers were regularly allocated to provincial courses, but in between they were sitting at head office or Roger Howman Hall and were not renowned for introducing, or being allowed to introduce, new ideas.

My motive was two-fold. Firstly, I wanted to break away from the perennial chair-backs, doilies and other stodgy articles that were made during our HEDs' and Development Workers' courses. Most of all, I wanted articles that would be fun for the young girls in the PVs and YFCs to make for themselves, such as tote bags and caps. I wanted dolls and doll-holders (a cloth that could be hung on a wall, with many pockets to



Development Workers with tote bags made at a girls' course in Mudzi

hold the dolls), nurses' uniforms and other sewn articles for playgroups. I wanted craft articles such as strings of beads from seeds of local trees. I wanted samples of educational toys. I wanted articles made of *shinda* and of 'waste material', such as hessian bags. Secondly, I wanted the skills trainer to keep time-and-motion records while making the articles, to enable me to plan course programmes better.

My request was causing problems: I was seen to be too wilful and upsetting the apple cart. Betty Mtero might be upset as, up to now, she had chosen the articles that skills trainers would make. I knew, however, that Dorianne and Adaire would also welcome new ideas: they were just not so vociferous about it. Adaire had at least introduced craft books in her Women Advisers' library. I wanted help with the pre-school helpers' course I was planning and had had to postpone several times.

I cannot remember if Miss Maphosa ever came, but I bought commercial patterns with my own money and we were able to make quite a few fun articles on my courses during the year. Sometimes the skills trainer, not having made a sample for the course beforehand, just had to keep one step ahead of the course participants. Generally, however, she, too, liked experimenting.



I was approached by a reporter from Swiss Television who was in Rhodesia to conduct a series of interviews with Swiss citizens about how they were coping with, and what they thought of, the current situation. He interviewed both Rolf and me – me at his hotel, the International. He wanted to go to a PV, of course. By this time it was rather unusual for an outsider to get permission to go to such a sensitive area, but I managed to get

permission for him from the DC Mudzi, Malcolm Pratt. So we were flown into Msau PV, the reporter with his cameras.

The people living in Msau had been living along the Mozambique border and had been moved away when the cordon sanitaire was established. They had not taken any particular notice of the international boundary for decades, and moved in and out of Mozambique through the bush, without papers of any sort, to visit relatives on the other side. People from both sides intermarried frequently. The women of Msau also purchased small glass beads in Mozambique with which they decorated small articles such as calabashes and, in the distant past, also items of clothing.

No longer being able to go to and fro, they could not buy beads any more. They were bitterly poor and they needed to raise some money if they wanted to engage in any projects. I thought I could help them by selling these articles in Salisbury but there were no beads to buy there, either. So I asked relatives and friends in Switzerland to send some. My mother sent boxes of beads, mostly in white and the primary colours which the Msau women used most. I was bringing these to them on my trip with the reporter.

In those days, my Shona was probably at its best. I could give a three-to-five-minute speech without interruption. After that I got tired and relied on the Development Workers or Women Advisers for translation again. I gave my little speech in Shona as I handed over the beads and the reporter recorded it. The women were thrilled, and towards the end of year I was



**Women showing me some beaded artwork on the visit to Msau/Kondo PV
with the reporter from Swiss Television**

able to take a few small, decorated calabashes to Salisbury for sale. I also bought some myself.

The reporter duly returned to Switzerland and I advised my family of the date and time his programme would be screened. No one ever commented, so I feared the worst. My brother Bernhard volunteered when I visited Switzerland in 1978 that he had not said anything so as not to upset me. I gathered that the reporter, whose voice was probably dubbed over my speech in Shona that, like the early colonialists who had brought beads to Africa and took away the peoples' freedom, I was bringing them cheap beads in an attempt to keep them quiet when what they actually desired was their freedom. I was deeply hurt, but it was just one extra hurt added to the many others that had lacerated my heart during that difficult year, and I never took the time to go to Swiss TV to ask to view the archived programme.

To add insult to injury, in the small colour photograph advertising the programme *Rundschau: Schweizer in Rhodesien*, which my mother had kept for me, the caption read 'Maja Chenaud, Sozialarbeiterin, erteilt in einem rhodesischen Dorf Haushaltunterricht' [Maia Chenaud, Social Worker, conducts housekeeping lessons in a Rhodesian village]! I had taken such trouble to explain to the reporter what the Women' Section was about and he had recorded that interview in his hotel. He, too, was depicting us as a 'cakes and doily brigade' – and worse.

AUSLANDSMAGAZIN

Rundschau

Schweizer in Rhodesien

21²⁰

In Rhodesien leben zurzeit rund 600 Schweizer. Im heutigen Bericht werden typische Vertreter dieser Auslandsschweizer-Kolonie vorgestellt. So zum Beispiel Albert Jucker, Goldschmied in Salisbury. Ihm machen die Wirt-



schaftssanktionen mehr zu schaffen als die Bürgerkriegswirren. Auf Frieden mit den Schwarzen hofft Rudolf Chenaud, der sich in Salisbury zum Strassenbau-Unternehmer hinaufgearbeitet hat. Maja, seine Frau, ist in den umkämpften Stammes-Reservaten als Sozialarbeiterin tätig. Weiter kommen Schweizer zu Wort, von denen einige die gängigen Vorurteile der weissen Rhodesier übernehmen, und andere, die auf eine friedliche Zukunft des Landes hinarbeiten.

Maja Chenaud (M.), Sozialarbeiterin, erteilt in einem rhodesischen Dorf Haushaltunterricht.



I visited the Protected Villages of Gozi, Chikwizo and Nyamande (Mudzi District) on 5 and 6 July 1977 to interview and select applicants for the 'Red Cross posts' we were trying to establish. Officially they were to be called 'first-aid posts', or 'dispensaries' though no one probably ever used these terms.

The circular from the Secretary for Internal Affairs to all PCs and DCs on the introduction and management of this scheme had been much delayed; indeed, it was issued only on 5 July. However, he had authorized Wyn Wilson to issue her own circular to DCs via the PCs in advance of his. The Women's Section was to carry out the initial selection of applicants for the Red Cross posts immediately, as the courses were to start soon.

According to the PC's instructions down the line, the village development committees and women's clubs, if any, should have been briefed by the district administration before my arrival as to how the scheme was to operate and what selection criteria would apply. Villagers were to pre-select a number of women to go for training and later to 'man' the posts. My task was to make the final choice, having assured myself that the candidates were capable of profiting from the training from an educational point of view, that they had a suitable personality, and that they were indeed acceptable to the majority of the village inhabitants. The Director of the Red Cross Society reserved the right to accept or reject any of the applicants so selected on their arrival at the training centre and to refuse to issue a certificate to any who did not pass the end-of-course examination.

There had been a number of attacks by insurgents on the PV and CVs in the weeks prior to my arrival. Consequently, I had difficulty finding transport from the district station and arrived a day later than announced. Arriving a day late meant, of course, that the people I had arranged to confer with were no longer assembled. Most of the members of women's groups, who had been waiting for me on the appointed day, had gone to work in the fields, and in Nyamande and Chikwizo I could find only a few members of the village committees. It became evident in two of the villages that these committees had been inadequately briefed, both in respect of how the Red Cross scheme would operate and about the selection criteria for the women who would be employed for an allowance.

In Gozi I did find nine members of the village committee, as they had

been addressed by the ADC on a different topic half an hour before. It seems that, in all the PVs, all the members of the village committees were male, and most often kraal heads. Members of the Gozi women's group were, however, working in the fields. Trying to re-assemble them would be too time-consuming and would probably fail, as they had not been allowed out of the gates for several days before my arrival.

Discussion revealed that the committee was under the impression that young, unmarried women were wanted. They declared themselves pleased to hear that mature, married women were preferred and wanted to reconsider their choice of candidates. They would let me know their preference by letter when they had conferred again. 'Could I please come again at a later date?' Women Adviser Bertha Chibisa and Development Worker Eugenia Machiridza, who were present, pointed out that 'many husbands of women with Grade 7 education were actually refusing to allow their wives to go for training in Salisbury and to be employed'. (Red Cross 'nurses' had to work every morning.) Committee members conceded that this was the case but they still wanted to reconsider. This meant that the women would probably miss the first course and that the establishment of their first-aid post would be delayed for several months.

Difficulties with selection procedures were, of course, to be expected, particularly in such a remote area, where few women had been to any training courses in the past. The prevailing security situation did not help. For me, with my tight work schedule, any failed trip was difficult to 'make good'.

I spent the night in Gozi Keep. Meeting the women's group when they came back from the fields was not an option, as they then had to cook the evening meal, bathe the children and do other chores. The curfew and 'lights out' in the Keep itself came soon enough. But I spent a few hours with the Women Adviser and Development Worker, listening to deeply disturbing tales of violence and trying to give them encouragement.

In Chikwizo PV, the next day, I was able to interview two candidates. One of them, Mrs Zuse, was one of the first women from this area to have ever taken part in a training course. It was a joyful reunion, as she had attended the ten-day look-and-learn motivational course that I had conducted at Domboshawa towards the end of 1975, before the people of the area were moved into PVs. When I had travelled with the course participants to Old Umtali Mission, Mrs Zuse had shown a lively interest in everything new that she encountered. She had implemented several innovations after her return and encouraged other women to do so.

The other candidate, Miss Muparazuwa, was an unmarried mother of two children by different fathers, who, in her own words, had 'never been

anywhere'. *Maputiro*¹ had been paid by the father of the elder child. I had, of course, no personal interest in the propriety of her conduct but the moral sensibilities of the community had to be taken seriously in the training of any workers. If the villagers disapproved of her, they would not go to her for treatment, nor would disapproving women go to any of the lessons she was expected to give, so her training would be wasted.

I later had the opportunity to discuss the matter with two members of the village committee, in the presence of Women Adviser Chibisa and Keep commander D. Clutton. The committee members, one of whom was the spiritual representative of Chief Chikwizo, assured me that Miss Muparazuwa was thoroughly acceptable. There had been many applicants and a full village assembly had made the initial selection, including her. The committee, in the presence of the chief, had made the final selection. The Keep commander concurred.

The committee members showed me with great pride a receipt for \$60, which the villagers had collected to pay for the training of two women. They had paid the money into a temporary account at the DC's office for safe-keeping, with the Development Worker acting as messenger. I was delighted at this first spontaneous contribution to a community project in the PV, and was happy to be able to tell them that they could use the money to better equip the first-aid post as the two women would get bus warrants and the training would be free of charge. A room for the project had also already been built, with materials paid for by Chikwizo Council.

In Nyamande PV some local political undercurrents came to the fore. About one third of its population were Chief Nyakuchena's people, while about two thirds were Chief Chikwizo's. I had been told earlier that Chief Nyakuchena's people constituted the 'bright minority', but I cannot vouch for this. Again, as I arrived a day later than announced, most women had gone to the fields. I was, however, able to interview the two candidates. Mrs Nyamajiwa was a widow and the resolute chairwoman of the women's club, which she had been able to keep active through many war-related vicissitudes. Miss Chikwedze was a much younger woman, very alert, and also a member of the PV's women's club.

After the interviews I had the opportunity to discuss the project with the secretary of the village committee, who was slightly drunk, its vice-chairman, the headmaster of Nyamande school, with the Women Adviser and the Keep commander B. Carson. Again, no one seemed to have been properly briefed and I had to give all the explanations as to how the

¹ *Maputiro* is a reconciliatory fine paid by a man for having had pre-marital sexual relations with a girl and not subsequently marrying her. It is paid to the girl's father as he can now not claim as much *lobola* (bridewealth) for her as he could have had she not been 'spoiled'.

scheme was to work and what was expected of the Red Cross trainees on their return. The applicants agreed to meet the expectations.

Suddenly Chief Chikwizo arrived, in an unusually animated mood. He complained bitterly about not having been invited to our meeting and demanded that one of the two 'Nyakuchena women' that I had selected and already approved be replaced by a 'Chikwizo woman'. I explained that I had asked through the Keep commander that messengers be sent both to him and to all village committee members and that if he had not received the invitation I was very sorry indeed. He actually had received it but thought I would wait for him to start the meeting on account of his position, even though he was over an hour late.

As for 'Nyakuchena women only' being selected and approved in Nyamande, I reminded the chief of the other invitations for training that I had extended and that no women in this PV, or in others under his jurisdiction, had taken them up. 'They will come from now on,' he said. 'I have come to trust you.'

I also reminded him that Gozi and Chikwizo PVs were under his jurisdiction and that thus already four 'Chikwizo women' were eligible for Red Cross training. The Keep commander added that a 'Chikwizo woman', Miss Kamupita, had initially been selected but that she herself had declined the offer. The chief grinned and let it be. A week later, however, I got a letter, signed 'A. Mugogo, Secretary under Chief Chikwizo', telling me to 'forget about Mrs Nyamajiwa' and to substitute Miss Kamupita. I ignored the letter.

A tiring journey followed, first to Mudzi, then to Mtoko, in yet a different armoured vehicle. As usual, our departure time and expected arrival time was radioed through to the stations. I was duly dropped off at Mtoko Hotel. I would have loved to have had a gin and tonic but the bar was full of white Rhodesian military personnel from the Mtoko army and air force base in Mtoko, telling tall war stories. I often wondered if they thought the black bar tender was deaf – he made sure he appeared dumb – as his presence seemed to make no difference to what they said and how they said it. The soldiers in the bar that night also did not seem to have seen a woman before, so I retired without a drink. There was no room service in the establishment. After a quick meal in the dining room I went to bed. I often had to do this at the Mtoko Hotel. Luckily I was usually exhausted and fell asleep almost instantly.

I was to interview applicants in Mtoko PVs the next day. However, several attacks on villages had taken place during the preceding two weeks and the district office was consequently unable to provide transport for me. I was assured that a Keep commander was dealing with the matter

and briefing villagers. I re-arranged my programme to enable me to make a selection trip during the last week of July.

There had been no request from the DC Mrewa for me to conduct selection interviews in terms of circular 31/77. He later informed the PC in writing that he did not wish to take part in the project.



On 18 March 2011, I interviewed Ruth Tucker, Director of the Red Cross Society at the time, now living in a room in the Athol Evans retirement home:

As Director of the Red Cross I was always in close contact with DCs, because most of the women we trained were from TTLs. ... I was told that a 'clinic' (we called them Red Cross posts) was wanted in Marenbe PV in Mudzi, about 30km from the district station, on the main road. That is where I met Simon Pitt, the Keep commander. I was impressed with the young man. He was the right sort. I told him that Internal Affairs, or the people, had to build a Red Cross post – to my specifications. If it was not done properly I would refuse to stock it. I was quite fierce at the time. We had standardized building plans and minimum specifications. They [the people] did it and I went to inspect. It was sort of all right.

Young women were trained to man the post at our training centre at Westwood-Kambuzuma. I visited Marenbe PV quite often to supervise them. [It was situated just off the tarred Salisbury-Nyamaropa road.] If I thought on one of my visits to any such posts, anywhere, that a trainee was not suitable, or did not work diligently, she had to be replaced.

The Marenbe Red Cross post was the first in the province and the prototype. During my own frequent dealings with the formidable Mrs Tucker to establish posts in other PVs, I received a great compliment in kind. She presented me with a copy of her book *A Guide to Better Health*. She wrote to me at the time 'I don't give this book just to anyone. It has to be earned!' In 2011 she could not remember that she had given me her book. In fact, she could not even remember me as a person! But during our interview she told me this:

I had written a book, *A Guide to Better Health*, with many illustrations. I travelled a lot during those times and had many overseas visitors. Once a delegate came from the International Red Cross. He was checking on conditions in WhaWha prison [near

Gwelo], on their diet, among other things. He asked whether I wanted to accompany him. Of course I did. And, because I wanted to show my manuscript to the delegate, I took it with me. At WhaWha, to my surprise, I found Didymus Mutasa,² who was a member of our Board of Trustees. We had the following conversation:

‘What are you doing here?’

‘I have been detained.’

‘Are you well?’

No answer.

‘Are you busy?’

No answer.

‘Well, you can be busy! Here is my book. I want it translated into Shona, because most of the women we train cannot read English.’

‘That would be very difficult,’ Didymus Mutasa replied.

‘I know it will be difficult. But you are very bright and you have lots of friends here to help you. I want it done properly!’

He promised to try. He produced the translation within three months. I dealt with the illustrations.

I used to visit Matabeleland, too, and women from Plumtree, Tjolotjo, etc., came for training [at Westwood]. I wanted my book to be translated into Sindebele for them. I detailed our field officer, I can’t remember his name right now, to translate it, telling him he had to do a good job as his translation would be checked by language experts. He did.

Now I needed the books printed. Lots of them. A Mr Harris, representing Oxfam UK, came to visit. He asked me what help I needed. I said:

‘Here are my books, in English, Shona and Sindebele. I need 10,000 copies printed of each.’

‘30,000 copies? Only?!’

‘Yes, to start with,’ I said firmly.

‘Where will you have them printed?’

‘At Marden Printers, Salisbury.’

‘And you want me to pay for them?’

‘Not you personally, but Oxfam.’

² Before independence, Didymus Mutasa was chairman of Cold Comfort Farm, a multiracial co-operative organization south of Salisbury, and was involved in nationalist politics. After independence he was Speaker of the House of Assembly from 1980 to 1990 and ZANU(PF)’s Secretary for Administration. Later he held various ministerial posts, but lost favour with Mugabe in 2014 and was dismissed from government and the party.

He went back to the UK, then sent me a telegram of two words: 'With Pleasure.' I sent one back, also of two words: 'Delighted. Thankyou.' I did not believe in wasting words either.



On 5 August, the new Chief Mtoko was installed by the Secretary for Internal Affairs, A.B. Yardley. Always interested in traditional matters, I was glad to be present there and to have the chance to meet both field staff and village women we had worked with on a joyful occasion. Women Advisers Gurupira and Chitekwe were most happy that a substantive chief had been installed at last and hoped that he would support their work.³

Sometime during August Chief Nyamukoho of Ngarwe TTL was killed. He was a first cousin of Women Adviser Chitekwe. The *African Times* reported:

The chief was killed by terrorists, who stopped a bus on which he was travelling and gunned him down in cold blood. ...

Chief Nyamukoho took an active part in the improvement of agriculture in his area. A number of grazing schemes were established, one of which won the National Grazing Competition.

The chief also encouraged the formation of young farmers' clubs, women's clubs and adult literacy groups. He helped in many agricultural shows and encouraged people to use fertilizers and manure to get better crops.

Upenyu hwevaanhu huri mudura [The life of the people is in the grain bin] has been an old tribal expression carried down through the ages by chief Nyamukoho's people.

Regrettably this progress, in which the late chief and his father spent so much time and interest, has slowly decreased with the presence of terrorists ...⁴



On 12 August 1977, Winifred D. Wilson received the Order of the Legion of Merit (Civil Division) from the President of Rhodesia, the Hon J.J. Wrathall for distinguished services to the country.⁵ She was one of the very few women who ever received it. I felt she richly deserved to

³ The Mtoko chieftainship rotated in the Gurupira clan.

⁴ *African Times*, 7 September 1977, 10.

⁵ *African Times*, 25 November 1977.

be honoured by being made a member of the Legion of Merit (MLM) but was somewhat disappointed at the unimaginative citation, which read:

Ms Wilson has headed the Community Development Section (Women) in the Ministry of Internal Affairs since the inception of the Section in 1964. She has travelled thousands of miles throughout the remotest areas of Rhodesia, visiting and inspiring her staff by her personal example.

Other members of Internal Affairs that I knew received an MLM on the same date included DCs Collett and Saunders and Agricultural Officer Ford, while DC Mirams had received his during the independence celebrations the previous year, and DC Pratt was so honoured on 11 November 1978.



In August the war moved into Salisbury. A bomb blast at Woolworths department store in First Street killed eleven people – eight black and three white – and injured seventy-six, mostly black shoppers, including women and children.⁶



Lionel Leach eventually took note of what Women Advisers had said to him during the ‘problem solving sessions’ at their refresher courses, the impressive number of women who attended Local Government Awareness training and the recommendations of his namesake, Mike Leach, the Regional Councils Officer. Lionel took action in the form of the letter overleaf.

I cannot remember how I commented. I would like to think that my proposal was along the lines recommended by the members of Dodito Council. They had been brought to Domboshawa for a training course. They debated the idea of having women on council and concluded as follows:

- Women should be allowed to vote and be elected as councillors.
- Having 1/3 women councillors to be is reasonable.
- It is undignified for a women to compete against a man in the same ward. Therefore:
 - There should be two types of wards – (i) wards in which both men and women can vote and men can stand for

⁶ *Sunday Mail*, 7 August 1977.

election, and (ii) wards in which only women stand for election, and both women and men can vote.

- Wards should be delimited as follows:

Say a council needs 12 councillors and thus 12 wards. The council area should (i) be divided into eight wards. In these anybody could stand for election. [In practice almost all would be men.] (ii) a second layer of four wards should be superimposed on the above eight wards. In these only women could stand for election.

The Secretary for Internal Affairs

17 August 1977

AFRICAN COUNCILS : ENFRANCHISEMENT OF WOMEN

I strongly recommend that the views expressed by the Regional Councils Officer in the attached memorandum, dated 17th August, 1977, be given the consideration they deserve and that immediate steps be taken to ensure that women are elected or appointed to African Councils.

The nationalists are very much aware of the feeling almost of resentment on the part of African women that they have no voice and they will exploit this. I am sure that the tribal women are becoming heartily sick of terrorism and all the deaths, misery and fear that these so-called 'freedom fighters' have brought with them. One way of bringing these women actively on side would be to have them serve on councils.

The RCO suggests an amendment to the legislation making it compulsory for at least one third of the elected or appointed councillors to be women and I support him. We are living in changing times and it is up to Government, always within reason, to anticipate and to try and meet change.

We need to have the support of our tribal leaders for something like this but I am sure if the Council of Chiefs gave the necessary lead then this support would be forthcoming. As the RCO remarks, the tribal people want councils, but they want it to be seen that the District Commissioner has resumed his traditional role, i.e. imposing his will in a benevolent manner for the benefit of the African people under his control.

I recommend:

1. This matter be considered by the Council of Chiefs without any delay.
 2. Once Chiefs have indicated their support then all warrants be changed immediately to make it possible for women to be appointed or elected, with an administrative directive that in the former event at least one third of those appointed be women.
 3. That the Act be suitably amended so as to make it arbitrary for at least one third of all councillors, appointed or elected, to be women.
- May I be advised please.

L.G. Leach
Provincial Commissioner, Mashonaland East

- This way we would have eight men and four women elected into council.⁷

The Dodito experiment, as far as I remember, was never implemented, because the council collapsed as a result of the war.

I do not know what action, if any, was taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to enfranchise women. Probably none. I reflected that an alternative and possibly easier solution at the time might have been to change all warrants to allow for some appointed councillors and to have women proposed by women's club area and district general meetings appointed.

But actually I was not sufficiently alert and proactive. With the PC's support I should have 'gone for the jugular' and enlisted the support of the Provincial Assembly of Chiefs, with the support of the Provincial Authority Officer and Regional Council Officer. There were councils where some or all councillors were appointed. Maybe we could have persuaded the relevant chiefs and DCs to find a way to appoint one or two women councillors at the appropriate 'election time'.



Usually the nights I spent in the PVs were 'uneventful'. I typically talked to the Keep commander and other paramilitary personnel as evening descended, then cooked my meal in the Keep kitchen or ate with the Development Workers, then sat and talked with them for a while under the stars until 'lights out' and fell into a fitful sleep in the bed I had been assigned in one of the rooms that normally had a different purpose.

A few nights were different. Once I had noticed the Keep commander from afar during the day. The young national serviceman looked a ghostly colour; usually they were tanned. When I bumped into him again I said, 'I am sleeping here tonight, will you organize a bed, please.' 'Where will you sleep?' he said, apparently aghast. 'In there,' I said laconically, pointing to the A-frame building. 'I have a sleeping bag.'

Later I saw him carrying a Springmaster bed and mattress to the building. I was familiar with the A-frame design: they were partitioned inside. I had stayed with the Development Workers longer than usual, entered the A-frame after lights out, undressed in the dark, crept into my sleeping bag and, as my eyes would not shut, stared at the ceiling thinking over the day's event. After a while I heard what sounded like a whimper. My eyes had adjusted to the near darkness and I suddenly

⁷ I take this from memory. Dodito councillors certainly wanted two 'layers' of wards, so that the indignity of women competing against men would not arise.

realized that there was no partition, that I was in the same room as the national serviceman.

‘What is the matter?’ I asked. ‘Are you not well? You did not look too good to me this afternoon.’

Another low moan. I got up and went over to his bed. He was curled up in the foetal position, moaning softly. I sat on the edge of his bed, took his hand, spoke to him gently and eventually he opened up to my enquiries.

‘I feel sick, very sick, very nauseous and I cannot eat,’ he said.

And after a while: ‘I am the only Euro here and I feel so isolated, so unequal to my task.’

Then: ‘I am cracking up, but I cannot tell anyone; they’ll call me a coward.’

We talked for a long while about his experiences, how he was sickened by the war, about his sense of isolation. He was so very young. A schoolboy, really. I told him he should radio for help, as he seemed physically very ill to me. But he said he would not, repeating, ‘They will call me a yellow coward.’

On my return I contacted the DC and told him, ‘You better get that national serviceman out of the Keep fast! He is very ill, I suspect hepatitis. I had hepatitis several times when I was younger and I also know that this illness can be accompanied by severe depression. Get him out before he cracks!’

The young man was evacuated to the military hospital and my diagnosis was correct. I never met him again.



In one PV, the Development Workers were not accepted. However hard they tried to help women improve their living conditions, none wanted anything to do with them. They asked to be transferred to a village where they could work.⁸

I paid them a supportive visit and was dropped off by the Internal Affairs Cessna. I would be picked up again the next day. I knew of an incident that had recently taken place near the village that the security forces had ascribed to terrorists, others to the Selous Scouts.

A good number of women and a sprinkling of men of all ages were

⁸ I cannot remember at which village this happened. Obviously the story never appeared in one of my official reports. I wrote it down during the 1980s but, as with a few other telling incidents, I am now at a loss as to where they happened. Nor can I remember the ‘incident’ that the people kept referring to. Who had been killed by whom?

assembled to meet me. By this time I had developed a fine sensitivity for whether or not guerrillas were present in a PV. I felt it with my skin, although nobody behaved any differently. On this day their presence within my audience was palpable, although I could not distinguish the *vakomana* from other young men.

I told the meeting that I had heard that they did not want the Development Workers in their village. 'That is all right with me,' I said. 'There are many other villages who badly want Development Workers. If at the end of this meeting you still tell me that you don't want them, I will take them with me when the plane fetches me tomorrow. But for now, let me first tell you about the Women's Section, about the work we are doing, and the role of Development Workers.'

I started my explanation, giving many practical examples. After being very sullen at the beginning, women started to ask questions. Even some of the men asked me questions, a few of them quite specific to other areas I worked in, including non-sensitive areas. One of the women caught my attention. She had very intelligent, alert eyes and a quick smile. She asked searching questions and sometimes openly expressed doubt or even disapproval. Sometimes she made positive comments, made others laugh. 'What a fine women's club leader she would make,' I thought to myself.

The meeting lasted longer than such meetings usually did. Apparently nobody tired. I was told about recent incidents involving the Rhodesian army, about killings attributed to the Selous Scouts and about their village having been partially burned down. It was plain that the male village leaders were testing me, that they wanted me to take sides. I did not fall into this trap. However, I genuinely commiserated about the suffering being brought by the war. 'I wish our politicians could sit together and sort out their differences peacefully,' I said, 'so that the people do not suffer.'

Once I had done my part, I asked the Development Workers to explain their role. This they did expertly, handling the questions well. Then one of the men asked where I was intending to sleep. 'In the Keep,' I answered truthfully. 'How can we trust you if you sleep in the Keep?' another man asked. I explained that these were my orders. Although I actually preferred to stay with my friends, the Development Workers, and although I was sometimes invited to stay in the home of a family I had got to know through my work, I would get into serious trouble with my employers, Internal Affairs, if I did not stay in the Keep. At this I was told very firmly by two men that, if I wanted the people to trust me, I would have to sleep in a hut that they would assign to me. I asked them to show me this hut after the meeting. At the end I reiterated: 'The chairman of

the village committee will have to tell me before sunset whether or not the village wants the Development Workers. If they reject them, they will pack their bags and come with me in the morning. I, too, will then never bother you again.'

I left with the Workers. We chatted a while in their quarters, had lunch, and then looked at the village. Two men came to show me where I would sleep. The hut stood near the perimeter fence and was obviously not in use; it was dirty and riddled with spiderwebs. I mentally prepared for sleeping there on the floor. I did not feel easy about it, I must say. Would I walk straight into a trap? Did they intend to kill me that night? Burn the hut with me locked inside? I told the men that I was not used to sleeping in a dirty place and that the hut would have to be thoroughly cleaned. They could come and tell me when this had been done.

Wanting to be alone a bit, I went to look at the hut again in the mid-afternoon. As I walked along the path, the woman I had noticed during the meeting walked past me, striding purposefully, hoe in hand. She never slowed her pace, did not even glance at me sideways, but said quietly and distinctly: 'Up to now I have been reporting on you. Now I would like to work with you.'

Women had given me information in this manner before, not stopping, not looking at me. Nobody watching could ever have said they had been talking to me. But this message was different. I was being watched and reported upon. Reported to whom? She went on to her vegetable patch; I went to look at the hut assigned to me. It had not been cleaned.

In the late afternoon the Development Workers said to me, 'We would like you to meet Mr X, the most influential man around here.' Of course I consented. We went to his hut. To my surprise he had a table in it, which he used as a desk, with two chairs opposite, obviously to seat visitors. The room gave the impression of being an office. The man, in his thirties, greeted me by name, shaking hands, though he did not introduce himself. The Workers left. I was not too surprised at his using my name, assuming that the Development Workers had told him about me. The non-traditional handshake was a bit more surprising. He spoke fluent English. Perhaps he had worked in an office in town before? After some pleasantries I told him about the meeting and its outcome. I told him about the work the Development Workers could do in the PV to help make life a bit more bearable, particularly for the women and children. During our interchange I got the uncanny feeling that he knew me.

'Mr X,' I said. 'Have we met before? I am sorry, but I can't remember.'
'No, we have not,' he said, somewhat briskly.

He asked many more questions about my work, even in pre-war time,

about work in specific places. I could not help asking once more: 'Mr X, we must have met before, though I can't remember, you seem to know so much about me.'

'Mrs Chenaux-Repond,' he said, 'I have watched you for the past four years!'

I was thunderstruck. I knew better than to belabour the point that he seemed to know so much about me. He was the local guerrilla commander or political commissar, I decided, on 'rest and recuperation' right in the PV. No doubt directing 'political education', decreeing what activities people could join or not join. Had he been at the meeting?

I told him that some people had said that they could not trust me unless I slept in a particular hut near the fence, that I was willing to do so, but could not unless they cleaned it out. He told me I need not worry. 'Just sleep in the Keep as usual,' he said, indicating that I was dismissed.

I slept in the Keep. Nobody came to say the Development Workers were not wanted. They themselves were quite cheerful in the morning. They said that they felt they would now be accepted, and, indeed, in time, they were able to do much good work in that village.

It occurs to me as I am writing this that I would have been obliged to report the presence of the suspected guerrilla leader and his men. I never had a conflict of conscience at the time. It simply did not occur to me to do so. The presence of *vakomana* in a village I visited had 'simply' become an occupational hazard.

Another time, while working in a village, I heard the detonation of a landmine in the distance. I briefly looked up, musing at the direction the sound had come from, then continued with what I was doing, forgetting about the unmistakable sound I had heard. Reflecting on my day in the evening I was shocked at myself. Had I become so desensitized to the possible horrendous death or mutilation of people unknown to me?



A number of Women Advisers faced increasing personal pressures. Mrs Chibisa was extremely distraught. Grace, her only daughter, had disappeared from Nyamuzuwe Secondary School without trace. Has she been abducted? Has she left of her own accord to join the freedom fighters? Is she dead? Killed by whom? How? Has she suffered greatly? Was she raped and mutilated? Left in the bush to rot? Is she being kept somewhere against her will? Has she herself become a killer? These questions churned and churned in her mind. She could not sleep or eat and lost weight. She felt that, if her daughter had left on her own accord, she would have told her

of her plan. However, I knew that most teenagers who left voluntarily actually never did tell their parents of their intention. I did my best to try and trace her through the International Red Cross. I was not successful.

Another Women Adviser brought her teenage daughter to the office; both were very distraught. The mother explained that girls in her work area were now required to go to the guerrilla camp at night to provide sexual comfort for the guerrillas.⁹ She had brought her daughter Nyasha (not her real name) to town for distant relatives to look after her but had not found them. Would I look after the girl until the relatives were found? I knew she had to return to work swiftly. If the *vakomana* found out she had brought her daughter to town they would punish her. She could pretend the daughter had absconded. I brought Nyasha home. Sue was at home. I explained Nyasha's presence to her and she was very understanding. I spent the evening with the girl trying light conversation, talking about my family and asking her about hers. I realized she was not at ease in our home. Why? I asked in vain. Dailos, our maid, noticed this, too, and offered to look after her in her room; 'she will be more comfortable with me'. She did. Dailos also helped to trace the elusive relatives, who had only gone to Mutare on a visit. Nyasha went to stay with them and eventually could continue her schooling in town.



I was tired, tired, tired. The hatha yoga group that I attended when I could had Pema (a renowned teacher from South Africa) visiting for a four-day seminar. I took leave; I enrolled; it would refresh my body and mind. But, before the day had ended, more parents had brought their children to the office. There had been gruesome killings in their area. They did not want the older ones to become *mujibas* or *chimbwidos*. They wanted their children to go to school in town. The urban schools were overstretched. More and more parents in war-torn areas placed their children in town. In order to get a place in a school, many birth certificates were 'lost' and new ones applied for, a male relative posing as the father, witnesses vouching for the identity of a child and its new 'parents', the child often changing its surname. Now registered as residents in town, they could be admitted to a school, though secondary-school places were very hard to find.

I didn't go to the yoga seminar. Nearly crying with fatigue and a deep sense of loss, I found the children places in schools. I succeeded by using

⁹ For more information, see *Women of Resilience: The Voices of Women Ex-Combatants* (Harare: Zimbabwe Women Writers, 2000).

every ruse I could think of – by pretending to be an ‘important’ officer in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, by inflating my rank and dropping names, by elaborating that, as government workers, the youngsters’ parents had become targets, as so many teachers had been. One of the headmasters I approached had himself fled with his family from an operational area. I was now glad that Philippa and I had been moved to Daventry House. We could engage in these activities unnoticed. Philippa did everything she could for the desperate women who came to our office.

One of the Women Advisers who needed school places for her children was Lydia Psuura from Mudzi. Mission completed, her husband sent me the following letter on 15 October 1977

Dear Mrs C.-Repond,

I am glad to write you this letter thanking you for all the help you gave us when our children were out of school. Now that all the children are back in school and are learning again I wish to express my sincere thanks to you for all the help you gave us. I am sure we should have never found these places if we were doing this all by ourselves. I was very much touched by your tireless effort of trying to find us places for our children. May God bless you that you may be of same service to many more that may need your help.

I and Mrs Psuura are still leaving here happily in Suswe Keep though we have been recently told that we were to move to a new site around the township. We may be building ourselves new houses again before the month ends. Greetings to all your family.

Yours faithfully,

G. Psuura

Kudzai and Grace had found places at Mangula Secondary School. I still have two other letters from his wife, Lydia, one with page one missing, the other with page two missing. There had probably been information on those that I needed to burn. One letter says:

... I will tell you more when I come to Domboshawa ... I will come without fail. You showed something to people you don’t even work with, e.g. Teachers and Health Assistants, etc. Mrs Chenaux, I really thank you for the great work you did to me. It shows me that my problems are also your problems too. Thank you very much with your helper Mrs Maphosa you did a lot. ... Sorry to write to you on such kind of [scrap] paper, I don’t have any other ... All my belongings were burnt ...

Women Adviser Norah Chitekwe needed to move some of her own and some of her relatives’ children out of the war area. She travelled to

Harare in a car belonging to a Mr Jowa, together with her older half-brother Elia, her daughter Gertrude, her niece Norah, and two teenage boys and came to see me in my office. Some days later, on 3 October 1977, she sent the following letter:

Dear Mrs Chenaux,

I wish to express my sincere thanks for the trouble you took in helping us find places for our children.

You really demonstrated love and self-sacrifice to people. I was very proud of you, especially when those men were talking the whole way through about it.

My brother Elia, oh, I can't tell all that he said. It is encouraging when you hear someone being praised, especially by men. They also thanked me for suggesting to see you at your office. I did phone you on Saturday and talked to your maid. I collected you were out.

We got the places for the two Form 3 boys, a place for Form 2 for my Getty and a place in Form 1 for Norah my brother's daughter with my name. We paid all the fees and on Saturday bought the uniforms and went to Goromonzi again.

May you please extend my thanks to Mrs Maphosa who is so cheerful in the office. We are also very lucky to have such type of an African lady.

God bless you all.

Yours sincerely,

Norah Chitekwe

Gertrude and Norah had been accepted at Goromonzi Secondary School, the two boys at Mrewa Secondary School – both of them as boarders.



The worst case I had to deal with was Women Adviser Nyakabau. As Russell Kilner flew me to one of the PVs on my way to a supportive visit I suddenly asked him: 'Would you mind making a detour and landing at — airstrip?' – an airstrip that was not on his itinerary or on mine. 'I need to see somebody there! It's very important!' I had no idea why I said that. I simply 'knew' I had to land there. Russell obliged. And there I found her, a forlorn figure crouching on the ground, whimpering. Mrs Nyakabau had the look of a haunted animal. She was ashen grey. She told me what had happened to her, to some of her fellow villagers, to the toddler on her back.

A gang of guerrillas had moved into the village at night and called all the villagers together. They lined up a number of men and women and paraded them as sell-outs. No one stood up for any of them. Thus they were declared guilty, sentenced to be executed. They were made to sit in a line, tightly next to each other. No bullets were to be wasted on sell-outs. They were axed to death. The brains of each one killed splattered over those next in line to be murdered.

Mrs Nyakabau was told that as a government worker she was being singled out for special treatment. She and the toddler on her back were already splattered with the brains and blood of those axed next to her. She was paralysed with fear, the toddler screaming. Suddenly the lights of vehicles could be seen, travelling fast towards the village. The terrorists disappeared into the darkness. Mrs Nyakabau remembered nothing after that, not even why and how she came to be at the airstrip.

'I'm taking you away with me right now,' I said. 'You can board the plane with me.' She refused. She would make her own way to my office. I carried on to the next village, did my work, sick to the heart and stomach, unable to eat, unable to speak about it to Rolf that night. Mrs Nyakabau was in our office the next afternoon. She looked mentally deranged. She huddled in a corner, hiding behind some boxes. As darkness fell and I prepared to leave I rocked the phantom figure in my arms. She made gurgling baby noises. Philippa was away that day. I was able to feed her a few spoons of mashed bananas and a few sips of milk. Then I left. I left the door unlocked, the light in the corridor burning, and explained where the toilet was, which I left open. I got no response, did not know whether she had understood. She huddled in a nest of demonstration materials for the PVs.

The next morning I brought a sleeping bag. Philippa and I sheltered her like this for a number of days – with one interruption. On Friday afternoon she disappeared.

Mrs Nyakabau was back on Monday morning. I found out later that she had returned to her home for the weekend. It had apparently dawned on her, in her mental darkness, that she could pretend to have been called to town on duty during the week but being away for the weekend would make her even more suspect as a sell-out. Her will to survive made her capable of travelling. The next day, her sister, who lived in town, came to the office. I remember her agonized expression when she saw her sister, who had lost her mind. She offered to look after her. Mrs Nyakabau refused to go. Hiding behind boxes in my office must have felt safer. Her sister brought food the next day. Mrs Nyakabau still needed to be fed with a spoon.

On Monday, at the provincial staff meeting, I heard more about the village attack. No report had come through that a Women Adviser was among those lined up. I silently cursed her DC. I did not comment. I said nothing about my charge.

I had to travel, but Philippa took care of Mrs Nyakabau. Eventually her regression reversed itself. She moved mentally from baby to toddler to small child to teenager. Then she disappeared to her home early one morning, without saying goodbye. She recovered in time, but had at least partial amnesia. She did not remember her stay in our office. I felt no need to remind her. I never told her DC. He never mentioned anything to me. Did he not know through his efficient network of informers that a member of his staff had been singled out for execution?

Eventually Mrs Nyakabau resumed work. The people accepted her. It seems they did not talk about the incident. She was never punished for having escaped, all the members of the gang of attackers having been killed in the 'mopping up operation'.

One evening I went to a lecture at the university given by a psychiatrist. I cannot remember the topic or the speaker's name. After the lecture I went up to him and asked where I could get some training as a counsellor. He asked me why I wanted this, and then questioned me in detail about the exact nature of my work, the hours I kept, my experiences. Then he said: 'We therapists take a lot of strain trying to support our patients in their suffering. But we have a support network. We meet regularly as a group, each one to debrief, to be supported by the others. You seem to have no support. I guarantee you, if you carry on like this, you will – I am not warning you, I guarantee you – you will have a nervous breakdown.'

I did not believe him. I was strong, so strong. I was disappointed and annoyed that he would not even tell me where I could get training in counselling. I needed to be able to support my field staff.



I had to face other pressures. By September, trouble at the provincial office had reached fever pitch. Another 'provincial tour' had been arranged, without my being consulted on the dates. I was simply sent a copy of the circular to DCs, specifying the dates and the topics to be presented. My written reply to what, of course, amounted to a written order to participate was somewhat aggressive. This really was not wise. Over-fatigued, over-committed and a pernickety perfectionist, I had lost my measure. The first four paragraphs would have sufficed. In any case I should have asked Miss Wilson to write that I was not available. But would she have done so?

To: Provincial Commissioner, Mashonaland East

MEETINGS OF PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT TEAMS

Minute DMN 1/2/3 dated September 5th, 1977, which has come to my notice today (13 September), refers.

1. Whoever arranges the dates for these annual provincial circuits has a knack of arranging them for dates when I am definitely not available. Could I not, perhaps, be consulted?

It is well known that I make a broad program plan and plan of work for the coming calendar year during December, that my plan of work is made three months in advance and that my itinerary for the coming month is submitted before the end of the preceding month. A phone call to my office would have yielded the information that I am totally unavailable on the stated October dates, and almost certainly not available during the November dates.

2. You will no doubt remember how disappointed the Women Advisers were when the last circuit was arranged while they were on their annual refresher course. You will also remember that you promised them that next time they would not be left out, since they were so very important. Nevertheless they will be disappointed that their Provincial Officer, responsible for their professional guidance, will not be present. How important is she?

3. Development Workers do not normally attend staff meetings in Mrewa and Mtoko Districts. Have they been remembered?

4. I note with interest that 'Province' will send out handouts setting out Provincial Policy and functioning of sections by the 23rd of September. It is impossible for me to produce a paper by that date.

5. I do, however, agree that a revision of the Provincial Policy printed in 1975 (written during the second half of 1974) is necessary. Should be this done in the form of 'handouts'?

6. I find it embarrassing to preach 'team work' to District Staff before the counterparts at Provincial level have started to function as a team.

7. The 'team spirit' should also, in my opinion, be evident in any Provincial Policy issued. Does the Provincial Policy issued in 1975 reflect to any significant degree, in concrete terms, how the various sections complement and support each other?

Have other Provincial Officers had disconcerting feedback from field staff after the last two circuits that it was evident to them that Provincial Officers were not functioning as a team, or at least that their talks did not appear to have been planned to form an integrated whole?

8. In my view the essence of 'team work' is consultation and joint forward planning.

While we do report post facto on selected aspects of work planned at staff meetings, has a concerted effort at joint forward planning ever taken place?

9. Would it be an idea to undertake a revision of the 1975 Policy Statement during September (a slack period), all Provincial Officers being informed of this now, specified dates set aside to discuss drafts, so that the new policy to be issued becomes a joint exercise? Could such an exercise possibly form the basis for a greater degree of joint forward planning during the coming calendar year?

M. Chenaux-Repond, PCDOW, Mashonaland East

PS: I regret to appear to be 'difficult', but my schedule of commitment – mainly courses – is so tight that I would not be available to take part in the planned circuit before December.

My head of office, Lionel Leach, was offended and angry. Piet Jordaan, the Provincial Agricultural Officer, egged him on in my presence when he heard that I was not coming on the provincial tour, telling him that he really must not tolerate such insubordination and affront. I should be transferred out of the province.



From 5 to 15 September, I led another Development Workers' refresher course, this time for those from both Mashonaland East and Manicaland because Alison Stewart could not run her own course on the grounds of ill health. My own Development Workers' requests for training, given to me during our seminars, were honoured, and their colleagues from Manicaland were happy with the programme.

Philippa Maphosa gave me invaluable help, acting as course co-ordinator and staying with the trainees throughout the day. She had also assembled the equipment, the handouts and teaching aids and the materials required for the course. We had problem-listing and -discussion sessions, of course. Even those Workers who had not yet met her personally trusted Philippa immediately and also discussed their problems with her informally outside the formal periods and sometimes individually. This was very helpful to them and gave Philippa a good insight into life in PVs and CVs.

For various reasons I had to do much of the other training myself – which also entailed writing the course materials. Thus I taught metric measurements, report writing (yes, I harped on about this again!) and, much more pleasurable, playgroup subjects: I still had the films about water-play and sand-play to show them. During our toy-making sessions we made toys for water-play from plastic bottles and piping that I had collected. These were obviously appropriate only for places like Nyakasoro, where there was a dam nearby, or such villages where water was abundantly laid on. But we all had fun playing ourselves!

We also made toys for sand-play. A colleague stationed at Domboshawa, Mr J. Mangwende, made wire toys with them. This certainly was not in his job description but he had fun doing it. He said that he would never be brave enough to travel to the war areas and was thus glad to be able to do something to make life a bit better for the children there. We made cardboard puzzles. I talked about creative 'free play' and we set out a model play area together. This last topic I still considered to be the most important, as we had to get away from small children being regimented like little soldiers by pre-school 'teachers' imitating the schools. Minimum standards for a playgroup in a PV were also discussed.

Wyn Wilson rapped me over the knuckles for spending so much time on playgroups. She did not seem to share my conviction that it was important to bring joy into the life of small children who had to witness far too much of the war. Furthermore, she did not approve of my doing the training myself, nor of Development Workers running playgroups. I did not expect them to run playgroups themselves, of course, though in some villages, where women were reluctant to group for any activities, this was the most constructive thing they could do. They certainly had to get the knowledge themselves in order to be able to pass it on. Toy-making skills were equally important.

I was also reprimanded for not having included 'community development' and 'working with the people' in the programme. My senior need not have worried, but I should have explained why I had not done this; simply putting those headings on the programme would have satisfied her. We discussed 'how to work with the people' in CVs/PVs at every seminar, during every one of my supportive visits: that we always took the 'non-directive' (community development) approach was a given. I really thought that it was more valuable to relate to the practical problems that the workers were facing in their specific circumstances rather than having theoretical lessons from trainers who had no experience in the PVs/CVs. Two examples of the kind of things that we discussed were: 'How do I make successive Keep commanders interested in my work?' and 'How do I deal with District Assistants who make rude jokes or want sexual favours from me or from teenage girls in the village?' Such issues also came up, of course, during 'problem-solving sessions'.

Much more serious for my deteriorating relationship with my senior was the fact that I had forgotten to enter Miss Wilson's interview dates on the course programme. This was, of course, an unforgivable slip. I was getting overtired – plenty of time had actually been reserved for her to conduct interviews with individual Workers while the others were engaged in toy-making and/or in sewing their uniforms. Although I apologized and sent her an amended programme to show this, Miss Wilson was so offended that she refused altogether to come to Domboshawa to meet the Development Workers.

The Section's skills trainer, Ellen Maphosa, started making cloth doll-holders with them for any playgroup that had been or might be formed. They also made a much-coveted macramé handbag, which I thought would appeal to teenage girls and encourage them to group into a girls' club. Then, in the middle of the course, she developed serious abdominal pains. Apparently it was a recurring problem. I took her to hospital on the Saturday and took over all her work for the weekend and on the Monday,

a public holiday, though Philippa helped me later. She was operated on for ovarian cysts, and later wrote:

I was discharged from hospital on the 20th September. Everything went on very smoothly except for simple complications. I am feeling much better now. I was really looked after by Doctor Brown and he was very kind to me. He also told me that he met you at a certain party and discussed with you about me.

I really can't find the words to thank you Mrs Chenaux for all you have done for me. Really only God knows how grateful I am. You have solved the most major problem I had. ... I really wanted to see you to tell you exactly what happened.

Anyway I am sure Doctor Brown will write you as he told me ...

I have no memory now of who 'Dr Brown' was who was said to have discussed the patient with me 'at a certain party'. I do vaguely remember, however, that there was a male doctor to whom I could refer rape cases. He had great empathy and a talent for consoling and restoring the violated women's and girls' self-confidence.

I did not neglect the obligatory nutrition lessons. This time we concentrated on the nutritional value of fresh and dried vegetables, taught by a community nurse from the Ministry of Health, Miss E. Zvangobani. The national co-ordinator of the Federation of Women's Institutes, Sue Jordan, wife of the Principal of Domboshawa Training Centre, taught vegetable drying and gave a cookery demonstration. We had a demonstration of a high-protein drink for children manufactured by Nutresco. The Executive Director of the Rhodesia Freedom from Hunger Campaign came out in person to explain his organization's objectives and mode of operation, explained its supplementary feeding scheme for pre-schools and primary schools in PVs, and distributed application forms.

The Secretary of the National Council of the Savings Club Development Movement came to teach the participants how savings clubs worked and how their books were kept. I had hoped that savings clubs might appeal to both male and female villagers and that Development Workers could help to start some. But even before any new ones were formed, three men came to say they wanted to meet me in private during one of my PV visits. When I did so, they told me that a few women and men in the village had been members of a savings club before they moved 'behind the wires'. They had continued to meet and save secretly. Would I take the money they had saved as a group and pay it into the club's Post Office savings account in Mtoko? 'We know you that you will not tell any one about the existence of our group,' the leader said.

Once again I was reminded that it was not only the Development Workers' or Women Advisers' skill in motivating people to form groups that determined whether or not they did. Local guerrilla commanders had a great deal of power. Some tolerated no meetings or groups other than – somewhat strangely, I thought – church gatherings. This is what Workers meant when they said that 'the women are afraid' to do this or that.

One of my colleagues in the provincial office, L. Johnson, the Principal Agricultural Officer, YFC, came to give lessons on the aims and activities of Young Farmers' Clubs and how to keep their books.¹⁰ We were keen to establish such clubs with young girls in the PVs. The Development Workers were issued with the YFC handbook, had to study it, and were tested on its contents later during the course. To make the test more fun, I bought a few small prizes for the achievers of the best marks.

It was very important to me that Development Workers be in a position to help young girl school-leavers to form groups that would be fun and that concentrated exclusively on neither homecraft nor agricultural skills. They needed to know that the YFC association suggested and fostered many other activities. It was unfortunate, though, that neither the YFC association, nor our provincial YFC officer, nor any local extension staff could give girls' groups in PVs much support. Thus, in 1978, I resolved, both Development Workers and Women Advisers would need some specialized training on how to work with youths.

We made a field visit, to a nursery school and the savings clubs' headquarters, and then an idea struck me. Life and work was tough for these young Development Workers in the PVs. I expected them to work hard on the course, too. They needed some light relief. I bought them all tickets for an Elvis Presley film that was playing in town. Of course I had to pay for these myself – money for cinema tickets was not on our modest vote for community development work with women! I did it gladly, and Rolf helped by going to purchase the tickets in advance. We all had a thoroughly enjoyable two hours together after our field visit.

We held a party at Domboshawa to mark the end of the course, dancing together to music spewed out by an ancient record player, with one cool drink each, though the kitchen also provided tea. It was amazing to see how these young women were capable of enjoying themselves with so little. They were simply happy being together, dancing – and being in a safe environment.

¹⁰ Now renamed 'Youth For Conservation'.

One of the Development Workers wrote the following letter to my husband:

Mr Chenaux-Repond,

Thank you very much for the work you did on the 16th September 1977. I am sorry for the big task our Auntie Maia gave you to go and book and buy tickets at the Mini Cine Rainbow for all the Development Workers who were on the Refresher Course at Domboshawa to go and watch that Elvis Presley film.

Again I am sorry for Mrs Chenaux-Repond was late to come home for she was attending our party. The party was mushi [good] and super. That's why she was late at home. But don't give her a fault, the fault and blame was on us.

Greetings to the family. God Bless.

Yours faithfully,

Miss Mavis Magaramombe



The Prime Minister, Ian Smith, had accepted the need for a transfer to black majority rule and was negotiating with the moderate nationalists Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Revd Ndabaningi Sithole and James Chikerema to forge an internal settlement that would exclude the two militant leaders, Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo. He was forced into an early election on 31 August 1977 by the defection of twelve MPs from his party, which robbed him of the two-thirds majority in Parliament that was needed to change the constitution. However, the Rhodesian Action Party, formed by the rebel MPs, was defeated. All fifty seats on the European roll were again won by the RF. The eight seats elected by voters on the African roll were won by 'independents'.

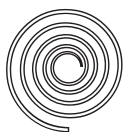
Towards the end of the year, officers in Internal Affairs received a circular that set down the pension that a widow would receive should an officer be killed by terrorists while on duty. I queried what pension a husband would receive 'should said officer be female'. I was fobbed off by the 'explanation' that 'in law the term "he" includes the term "she"', and therefore the pension would be the same.

I did not believe this, so I went off to find the relevant regulation. It said, in effect, that should said officer be female, her husband would receive a pension if he was mentally or physically incapacitated or insane. I was incensed and brought this to the attention to my fellow Community Development officers, although none of them was actually married. Still, they supported me in protest.

Miss Wilson had also been incensed and had queried the justice of this provision. My notes of a staff meeting held on 4 and 5 October 1977 say:

Miss Wilson read out a reply from Mr Burton to her query, but officers were not satisfied and Mrs Stewart suggested that the opinion of the Attorney-General be sought.

I do not know whether this was done, but no change in legislation came about. My husband Rolf said sarcastically, 'There is no problem. Any husband who allows his wife to work under these conditions must by definition be insane.'



I remember a few nights in PVs with a different ambiance, though I have forgotten exactly where the incidents recounted below took place.

It was to be a full-moon night. Some men told me that there would be a ceremony that night and the people would dance from sunset to sunrise. They were very insistent that I join in. I went. The full moon had risen orange in the sky, then changed to silver. A huge fire was burning; drummers, people dancing, their bare feet stamping on the ground. Even the DSAs joined in, leaning their weapons against the wall of a nearby hut. At the beginning I was conscious that they were keeping an eye on me, but later they forgot about me altogether. Despite my tiredness, I danced for a long time among the women. Abandoning myself to the rhythm helped me to forget my emotional pain, almost permanently with me now. I remember the drummers holding the top of the big drums over the fire from time to time. I was told that they did this to tighten the skin and thus give the drums a better sound.

At some stage the people's dancing was becoming quite lewd. I was exhausted by now and sat down on the ground, leaning my back against the poles of a hut, nodding off, then jerking myself awake. I was determined to witness what I surmised would be the appeasing of some spirit or spirits. But I never witnessed what could be called a 'ceremony': everyone just quietly dispersed as the sun came up over the horizon and bathed everything first in pink, then in crimson light.

I was collected by a national serviceman in the early morning and told that a Kudu would shortly be departing for Bright Lights, as Salisbury was called by the military and paramilitary, and would give me a lift. The plane would be on duty elsewhere.

A Kudu was a heavily armoured and mine-protected vehicle. It had zig-zag-shaped deflection plates to ensure that a thrown grenade detonated before it actually hit the side of the vehicle. A grenade worked on the principle of an inverted cone through which the core of metal was propelled by explosives to penetrate armoured plating. Inside, the Kudu had metal benches along its outer walls and was thus able to



carry perhaps twelve people. The journey back to Salisbury, about 150km away, was rather uncomfortable. I was dropped off at police headquarters, and from there took a taxi home.

That night we were invited for dinner. I remember a beautifully set dinner table but, as I sat there, a thick fog settled between me and the diners opposite. I could hardly see them. I heard their voices as if they were far away. The conversation inevitably turned to the war. I remember thinking: 'You haven't got a clue.' I repeated that sentence silently to myself, over and over. I feared that I would faint from fatigue, disgracing my husband; repeating it to myself helped me to stay upright.

In 1977, John Lovett published a coffee-table book entitled *Contact*. It has a short chapter on Internal Affairs and even the women field staff of our Section are mentioned.¹

Finally, there are the women of Internal Affairs. In many ways the work of the Women Advisers and Development Workers must be considered as even more dangerous and demanding than that of their male counterparts in the Department. They are obviously easier targets for terrorism, and few have anything but the most superficial training in the handling of weapons. Yet they daily travel the remote areas, organising clubs and generally trying to maintain a sense of normality in the village life.

Within the first few months of the start of the war in the north-eastern zone, three separate attacks were made on Department women, and many were personally threatened. In the years since then, not a single Women Adviser or Development Worker has left her post because of terrorist activity – on the contrary, the war has brought an increasing number of volunteers and many new challenges for community-minded women.

In the protected villages particularly, women have a major role to play. In the early days of the village establishment, they had to work quickly to help people settle to an entirely new life style. They organise shows, get clubs going, hold training and education courses, and generally try to quicken the pace of life to make it more interesting and rewarding for people who have suffered the disruption of resettlement.

There is a more important side to the efforts of the Community Development Section. In their daily activity, the women are constantly in contact with the tribeswomen at all levels of the community. Their consistent helpfulness is a great influence

¹ John Lovett, *Contact! A Tribute to Those Who Serve Rhodesia* (Salisbury: Galaxie Press, 1977), 147.

for good on people who would otherwise be exposed directly to alien indoctrination.

One could say that this particular aspect of the women's work very much typifies the overall IntAf effort. It is to maintain contact with the people, to give them strength through the certainty of continuity in administration, and confidence in the law and in community development.

I must say, I was not very pleased at the slant of the first two paragraphs, and was somewhat cynical about the third and fourth. And the women workers had neither weapons nor weapons training!



I held my second pre-school helpers' course, as promised, but caused some annoyance to Wyn Wilson. She had made me cancel the time slot for the course I had booked at Domboshawa for the second half of 1976 and I had re-booked it for the first half of 1977. Then it was decided to cancel all the time slots booked by the Section, except those for staff courses. I booked another pre-school helpers' course for the second half of the 1977. This one I was not willing to give up, and I wrote somewhat irritably to my senior to tell her that.

This second course was designed along the lines of the pilot course that I had held in 1975, with a few improvements based on its evaluation, and with the equally full involvement of members of the Playgroup Association. It turned out to be a course with a difference.

The course was due to start on Monday 10 October. On Friday, the head of PAR, Anne Tarr, informed me by telephone that none of its members would come out to Domboshawa. Several husbands had said that the war had already arrived in Chinamora, that Domoshawa was no longer safe and they had prohibited their wives from travelling there. Wyn Wilson wanted me to cancel. I was not prepared to do that. I was particularly concerned about the women from operational areas I had invited, who could not be informed, who had had to be courageous to come at all, and who would be incredibly disappointed if they were turned back because the course was now cancelled.

So I spent the weekend writing training material for the first two days, which the PAR had promised to supply but now also failed to deliver. I brought it into the office for stencilling first thing Monday morning, pleading urgency and instructing that it would be roneo'd without my waiting to check the typing. I still had a key to the first floor in Harrob House and could thus enter after hours to drop off and collect things.

While individual offices were usually locked, the room with the switch-board always stayed open. The roneo'ing was duly done. I collected the handouts at daybreak the next morning and placed the drafts for the next day's on the switchboard, to be handed to the typist. And I did the same the next day and the next.

Philippa came with me every day, arriving at the office at 7.00am, saw to the logistics of the course and helped with the making of toys and apparatus. I gave all the theoretical lessons myself, apart from the lesson on the council and the health lessons – luckily, I could muster a trainer resident at Domboshawa for the latter.

The bus to fetch the children from Molife pre-school had been cancelled by I don't know whom. Thus, each morning, while the trainees set up the play area, I made three trips to Molife and ferried the children in my R6. Lack of space did not allow me to take a mother to accompany the children. Shy at first, the children soon became boisterous, made a lot of noise and scrambled all over each other within the car. When the free play and observation session was over, I made three trips to take them back. This left no time for lunch. Needless to say, I was totally exhausted by the end of the course.

However, the PAR did provide a highlight for the course participants, which we all appreciated immensely. All were invited to the home of one of its members for a day and allowed to observe the playgroup she ran there for the morning. In my thank-you letter to Anne Tarr I wrote:

On behalf of the pre-school supervisors who attended the course I would like to express my sincere appreciation of the efforts you and members of your committee made to give them as many lessons as could be managed during a morning at Mrs Living's home.

They were all appreciated and the opportunity to observe Mrs Living's playgroup and her free play area was extremely helpful.

The course participants were very touched by the way Mrs Living (and the other members) made them feel at home. This is an experience which the women from the operational areas in particular will never forget.

This group was particularly responsive to all subsequent lessons and practice sessions [on account of their observation of this play group]. If I worked late into the night preparing lessons and handouts, they worked late, too.

They managed to make an astounding number of sets of apparatus, which included:

1. Sets of scrapbooks which included themes like 'our store',

- ‘at home’, ‘in town’, ‘things we like to eat’, ‘things people do’, ‘farming’, ‘children from many places’.
2. Sets of scrapbooks with assorted big, clear pictures.
 3. Sets of books telling the Christmas story.
 4. Sets of sewing cards (big holes, shoelaces).
 5. Sets of matching cards.
 6. Sets of puzzles.
 7. Sets of sorting trays.
 8. All sorts of apparatus for manipulative play.
 9. Lottos (most original, done over the weekend without my presence).
 10. The ‘button cards’, using seeds.
 11. Memory games.

We used tons of the donated material and it was quite an experience for me to watch them developing ideas themselves of what could be used to make what.

They reacted very well to the daily practice sessions with children and most seemed to develop a good sense of what is meant by ‘free play’.

The theoretical lessons will need reinforcement, but discussion and observation seemed to show that they had absorbed as much as can be expected in two weeks.

Indeed, the women talked among themselves in the evenings, not only about what they had seen but about how kind and friendly their hostesses had been towards them.



My trouble at the provincial office grew more serious. My stating that I could not come on the provincial tour had triggered further problems. I did not seek Wyn Wilson’s support, partly on account of my planned pre-school helpers’ course which I feared she would cancel.

Lionel Leach was often saying to me: ‘You are not part of the team. Every other officer has said so. I must ensure that I am getting the best out of all staff. We must all work for a common goal. All other officers are giving me their full co-operation – you are the odd one out.’

Why was I the odd one out? Was it the fact that I had been asked to report what the women I worked with said to me about security matters? The very fact that women in PVs now always gathered spontaneously when they knew I was coming, and that men had begun to join the women’s gatherings, had aroused suspicion. ‘We are sure that the women

talk to you. We want a full report from you what transpired in respect of security matters.' I had refused point blank: 'My work is entirely based on trust. I would never – repeat, *never* – betray their trust!'

I could have been more politic. I could have assured them that if I heard anything of military importance I would report it. I was indeed sometimes surprised at what women told me, knowing full well that I was a representative of Internal Affairs. Not that what they told me would have been much use as military intelligence. I was told much in retrospect. By the time I got back to town, anything would have been out-of-date anyway, from a military point of view. Surely the security forces, including the paramilitary personnel in Internal Affairs, did not need me to win this war! The thought was ludicrous.

We did not talk about what could have been classified as military intelligence, anyway. The women told me what people thought and felt about the war, about conflict within their own families and between neighbours and its repercussions, about their fears for their children, about parents having lost control over their children who had become *mujibas* or *chimbwidos*. Some told me about having family members involved on both sides of the conflict, about the Rhodesian propaganda wasted on them, about the utopia awaiting us all when the war ended. Some of this might have been useful in the war to win the minds and hearts of the people – if anyone had ever truly listened to me. I had long given up trying to talk about what women, and people in general, actually thought. Nor would I waste my time telling anyone that some of the male field staff, notably Community Advisers, told me that the Rhodesian forces would never win this war and why.

Thinking back, my sensing that guerrillas were sometimes present in the PVs I visited – though I never tried to verify this by asking outright – might have been classified as 'useful information'. It never even occurred to me to report it. To me their presence was just an 'occupational hazard'. Was the source of my trouble the fact that I was the only provincial officer who still travelled to operational areas, I wondered.²

What had Dave Miram's 'ground coverage' revealed about my activities and attitude? Had he made reports to the PC? Verbally to Piet Jordaan? Had what I did and said in the PVs been embellished, distorted? Internal Affairs was known as the eyes and ears of government: all staff had a responsibility to find out people's likes and dislikes in respect of general development policy and political matters and report back to the DC. As

² Dave Ford, Principal Agricultural Officer, was an exception. He was officially stationed in the provincial office by then, but, serving Mudzi and Mtoko districts, he had chosen to remain living in Mtoko during the week, while his family had moved to Salisbury.)

the war intensified, the ministry was also tasked with collecting intelligence on security matters in conjunction with the police, and DSAs were involved in this. Regular meetings between the DC and the Member-in-Charge on security matters were instituted. DCs also built up their own system of paid informers selected from among the people.³

Dave Mirams, suspicious of me, had some paid informers who were to report specifically on my movements and what I was saying to the people. I was eventually told this by one of the women informers herself. I returned to being the odd one out and told Lionel Leach:

Yes, I do feel isolated. I work in a different building. I did not make that choice. Anyone else could have been moved when space became scarce. You could have kept the team of provincial officers together. Yes, having been moved a block away does make communication with colleagues more difficult. But I do come to Harrob House regularly when I'm not in the field, or training at Domboshawa.

Which fellow provincial officer has ever visited me in my office to discuss anything of mutual concern? For a social chat? Out of sheer curiosity? Which DC or other district officer – except Debbie Allan – has ever visited my office when in town? These were rhetorical questions. Then I asked point blank:

What specific reason does any other provincial officer give for saying that I am not part of the provincial team? Is 'not willing to be' implied? Would you please arrange a meeting at which this issue could be discussed?

No such meeting was ever arranged, of course. Lionel Leach continued:

You are overworked! You work in the field to the detriment of the provincial effort. You should be part of our deliberations more often. Women Advisers and Development Workers are on the staff of the DC. Delegate to district level. You want to do everything yourself, to the smallest detail!

I was exasperated:

Who do I delegate to? District staff are all overworked with the 'war effort'. What, specifically, should I delegate? What Women Advisers and Development Workers need most is moral support. Who is going to give them that?

Do you remember what Women Advisers said to you during the Refresher Course in 1976? You have it on file. I quote:

The PCDOW has so many Women Advisers and

³ See S.H. Fynes-Clinton, *The Shattered Jewel* (Harare: The author, 2010), 130.

Development Workers to look after, and so many other duties like training and office work, that she cannot visit our work areas often enough. Can she be relieved of some other duties so that she can visit us more often?

And, more importantly in view of what you have said:

Can there be a district officer in every district who can deal with the problems of women [in the field] and the problems of women staff?

No doubt you did something about that last request. What was your response from DCs? I certainly have not seen any such arrangements being made.

In fact, DCs Mudzi and Mtoko have written to you that they want more supervisory visits from me because they have no one in the districts who can give the women workers adequate support. DCs Hartley and Gatooma have been contemplating employing temporary women staff to deal specifically with women's clubs, since I cannot visit often enough. The glaring exception has been Mrewa.

Besides, neither in Mrewa nor Mtoko do Development Workers attend the monthly field staff meetings. In Mtoko they work under the most difficult circumstances and feel very isolated. Would you please persuade the DC's office to make it possible for them to attend monthly staff meetings and thus become integrated into their teams?

I got no response to my statements above. Nor to this:

Yes, I am overworked. I have forty-two staff to support and supervise. Have you ever heard of such a span of control? Over so wide a geographical area? How many field staff does each of the other provincial officers have? The PAO has six senior officers reporting to him. While all others do supervise field staff, they have markedly fewer than I have – not more than half a dozen.

Which other officer at province travels to operational areas to support their field staff?

What *is* our common goal?

The last two questions clearly annoyed him.

What *is* the crux of the matter, I asked myself. Mine and the men's fundamentally different outlook? Their overriding concern was 'to win the war'. Mine was 'to help women caught up in the war to make life a little better, bearable' and 'to help our staff to help women to do so'.

We got nowhere with our 'discussion'. Lionel Leach asked me to request a transfer. I refused. I was not going to abandon my field staff.

One evening, working late, I heard voices in the conference room. I stopped on my way out. I heard Lionel Leach say: 'She has refused.' Then Piet Jordaan: 'You can enforce it. Better, still – let's transfer her around the provinces until she leaves altogether.' I knew then that my battle was lost.

Wyn Wilson could not or would not protect me. The final insult came when she came to discuss my probable transfer with the PC Mashonaland West. He said in my presence: 'I'll give her a try.' He probably did not mean this literally, I concluded later, but at the time I understood him to mean it thus. I had become *persona non grata*.

The hurt went deep. I could not talk about these conflicts to my husband. For months he had wanted me to resign, saying that I 'owed it to my family'. If he knew what problems I had with the PC, with the DC Mrewa, with Wyn Wilson, he would have absolutely insisted.



The 'situation' in Mudzi District got more and more desperate. On 31 October 1977, Women Adviser Lydia Psuura wrote to me:

I have thought of writing you this letter telling you how I am these days. I wish I could see you. You know Mrs Repond this year I have been in a difficult time but I was trying to do something, e.g. fowl keeping, playgroups, but all these collapsed because of the situation we are having here. Suswe CV, Steven Dam CV all these were burned and all the people ran away.

I was afraid to stay alone in the CV. I moved to Mtoko where my grandfather is.

These things happened when I was at Nyakuchena and Chikwizo areas for a competition at Makaha PV. You know that I still wanted to work with women now there is no one in this CV.

I think everybody knew this was going to happen but myself I did not know, so I am afraid.

I will tell you more at the refresher course. I will come. I won't fail. We are all well but not happy, it is because of the damage we had at Suswe on the 28/10/77. I am sorry to write to you on such kind of scrap paper. I don't have any other.

For Mrs Psuura, the question of where to live became complicated not only because of the burning of the villages in her work area but because she was a teacher's wife. As mentioned earlier, we seldom trained a wife of a government employee as a Women Adviser because they were meant to work from their home and civil servants were liable to transfer. We had made an exception in this case because we could find so few suitable

women with Standard 6 education in the district. Mr Psuura was teaching in his home area, where the family was also tilling land, and was not likely to ask for or to be given a transfer. All this had changed during the war. I received her letter while I was engrossed in the fateful pre-school teachers' course (see below) so I could not immediately go and see her. I sent her a message to stay with her family where she was and that the matter would be discussed at the November refresher course.

In her work area, all the villages to which people had been moved were CVs and were unprotected by a surrounding fence. The Psuuras, with five children, moved with the people from their home area to Chingaruru CV in August 1976. Within a few months, the inhabitants of Chingaruru were ordered to shift to Benson Mine CV. Then, as the school that Mr Psuura had taught in for years was closed and he was transferred to Chifamba School near Suswe CV, the family moved to Suswe. During October Suswe was burned down. So were Steven Dam, Shinga and Nyamukoho CVs – all within her work area.

The Psuuras had lost their good home in the TTL, then built a new one in Chingaruru, then one in Benson, then one in Suswe. After the burning of Suswe, they fled to Budjga APA near Mtoko, where the husband's father had a farm and people were not living in PVs or CVs. The couple travelled to work – the husband's nearby; the wife's within Suswe CV – every day at about 7.00am (a bus was still running), leaving for the farm again at 4.00pm.

During the refresher course, Mrs Psuura said that they were afraid to build in Suswe again. 'We are being watched. People will think we are very rich. We will be branded,' she said. We knew that this was a real possibility. The DC's accounts office refused to pay for her bus fare to and from work on the grounds that she was supposed to work from home. Travelling to work every day took \$18 from her monthly salary of \$59. Her husband had had enough of all that moving and the danger that the family found itself in because the parents worked for the government. They would have to abandon their TTL fields, tilled with hired labour, anyway.

He applied for a transfer to a school in Mtoko. It would be easy, at least for him, to travel there from the farm. He wanted to have his family with him. 'Could Mrs Psuura not work in Budjga APA, from her father's home?' Her working in Budjga would involve her being transferred to Mtoko District. Miss Wilson knew that Mrs Gurupira, responsible for that area, was in poor health and could do with a smaller work area (one CV only) in these difficult times. She deferred a decision, as the husband would only know whether he got his transfer by the end of the year. We did see to it, however, that her bus fares were being paid.



I conducted my last refresher course for Women Advisers Mashonaland East plus Hartley and Gatooma districts during 14–25 November 1977. Philippa Maphosa was the course co-ordinator and was present throughout. I pretended that nothing was wrong. I was hoping against hope that the decision to transfer me would be rescinded.

This year the Women Advisers had to write an annual report before coming to the refresher course. I gave them the headings under which they needed to report. Obviously these headings had to be different for Women Advisers in PVs and those in ‘normal’ districts. They took great care over these reports, though the quality still differed. Since they reported under standardized headings, I had a more objective basis than previously for comparisons between districts. The Women Advisers in Wedza District said that the DC now always read their monthly reports and that he had said at a field staff meeting that the Women Advisers’ reports were clearer and more informative than those of other staff. Indeed, he told his other field staff (all male) to adopt the format of the Women Advisers’ monthly reports, so they had some teaching to do. This greatly boosted their will to write good reports!

Mrs Goto’s ordeal with the security forces was not mentioned in her colleagues’ reports. She herself was now on ‘maternity leave’. When I asked Mrs Chitumba in 2014 she did not seem to remember the incidents with the security forces. She said:

I heard from people living in my work area that Mr Goto was killed and that Mrs Goto had fled to town with her children. I was numb with shock. We had been such good friends. Neither the DC nor Miss Wilson ever talked to me about it. Only Mrs Woods [the wife of the DC’s accountant who had helped us so much with the women’s clubs] did speak to me about it. She was terribly distraught. When I had to move to the DC’s camp during 1979 for safety, together with other government workers, she said to me: ‘Mrs Chitumba, please do not move out of here, please do not go anywhere, you are in great danger!’

Women Adviser Susan Sakuringwa’s annual report indicated how the farmers in Zviyambe APA adapted to the changed ‘political situation’ in terms of ‘re-arranging’ the various groups they had formed for development purposes.⁴ The report is reproduced opposite, only slightly edited.

⁴ Incidentally, Susan Sakuringwa wrote the clearest, though still concise, report and won first prize in the competition I had arranged.

Annual Report by Women Adviser Susan Sakuringwa for the period 1 January – 15 November 1977

District: Wedza, Working Area Zviyambe APA and Ruzane TTL

Introduction

1977 has been a rather difficult year in connection with women's activities in both Zviyambe APA and Ruzani TTL because of the present political situation. Some activities are still alive, though not in the degree I expected. Some groups have changed their whole set-up and are calling themselves by a different name, as you shall see in the report.

INTEREST GROUPS

Poultry: the 3 groups active at the beginning of the year are still active, with an increase in membership. They are composed of women only and are helped by the W/A and by HEDs. I visit each group twice a month to help them to organize their committees properly. Marketing is not simple. The women wish to continue with this project.

I.C.A. Farming Groups: this type of group has changed its name to Group Work Magejemo – because of the political situation. At the beginning of the year there were 3, now there are 15. The former large groups have split into small ones. They are composed of men and women. They work together to adopt better farming methods. They are helped by [Conex] field staff. I visit each group about once a month through invitations at meetings. Members are benefiting by getting better yields.

Societies: this type of group is very popular and has not been interfered with by the political situation. There has been an increase in groups from about 16 at the beginning of the year to about 30 at the end. About 10 were composed of both men and women, about 20 of women only. They are each contributing small amounts of cash at regular intervals, the lump sum being given to one member in turn. These groups also brew beer and cook food for sale and dance at their meetings. Thus the women members also learn new recipes. Some even practice public speaking. They have no problems and plan to continue with their meetings.

Beer selling parties – 'Ndavi': This is another grouping which has become more popular. People are free to mix and discuss needs and problems in these groups. There is no membership as the invitations are made by individuals. A woman brews beer for sale, either for herself or for her husband. People are then invited to come and buy and drink. I visit perhaps one group a month by invitation.

Ruwadzano Groups: These groups have fallen down in Zviyambe and Ruzani. There were about 20 groups (Anglican, Methodist and Catholic), but they are no longer meeting.

Women's Clubs: No report. [They are no longer active].

HOME VISITS

About 10 days are spent on home visits in a month.

1. I usually discuss needs, problems, give information, new ideas and encourage self-help projects and the spirit to do something in our difficult circumstances.
2. I discuss these things [also] with **influential women**. These women will help you to pass the message.

3. I find out general feelings about progress and things which hinder progress.
4. I create acquaintances that in time women who do not know me yet will feel free to discuss things with me.
5. I follow up projects and encourage women to continue.

TRAINING

Women/Men: There have been no training courses organized by W/As or anybody else in the area this year.

Staff: I had 2 seminars with the PCDO(W). I benefited by learning to write and to follow progress plans. They helped me to plan my work better and [will help] to measure [the results of the] work I have done this year and to see whether the women have achieved their goals. I need to revise report writing and to write progress plans.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Both Ruzani and Zviyambe Council are not operating any more. The administration of schools, clinics, dips and rates are now done from the DC's office. The falling of these two councils has been a big blow to the people of the area. People are now travelling long distances to the DC's office for any problem or need.
2. [Council] clinics have closed down. Patients are now travelling a long way to the nearest possible clinic – Makarara or St Mary's in Rusape.

LIAISON

Tribal Leaders: There was practically nothing done by Tribal Leaders this year.

1. Chief Ruzani has left his chieftainship and is living in the Zviyambe APA.
2. The two headmen Goneso and Negombge were murdered.
3. The kraalheads are very quiet and do not wish it to be known that they are kraalheads.
4. The wives of tribal leaders are also quiet but they are co-operating with other women in 'society' meetings.

District Commissioner: I meet the DC once a month at the staff meeting where we hand in our monthly reports. The DC has shown interest in reading the Women Advisers' monthly reports. At the August meeting he commented that they are clearer than the men's and ordered them to write their monthly report as the W/As do.

Field Staff

Agricultural Workers: I have not had much contact with Agricultural Workers [of DEVAG] this year because they were not organizing any meetings [in Ruzani TTL]. In Zviyambe APA, however, I have worked with Agricultural Workers [CONEX staff] in ICA meetings, poultry project clubs and group work meetings.

I think these men are beginning to understand our work now and they need our co-operation. They believe that the women's groups are the right ones to work with because they accept new ideas quickly.

Health Assistants: There has been a series of changes with Health Assistants this year and I have not worked with one yet.

Community Adviser: I have not worked with him this year. It is not that we do not want to co-operate. I think the workers are afraid to be seen with each other in public. Also, he does not travel to Zviyambe.

PCDO(W): I had 2 seminars: The first in January (2 days) and the second in June (1 day). We revised the 3 annual progress plans. Mrs Chenaux-Repond visited me in Rusape and we discussed my work and my monthly reports. I also contacted her in her office on my way to the FAWC conference at Domboshawa. We discussed the topic of Women ICAs in Zviyambe. She had a man from Natural Resources Board with her – a Mr Jalami.

TO SUM UP

The most important progress women have made is the formation of poultry project clubs. I had planned to convince about 25 women to do this. Now more than 100 are doing this project. The problem of women's clubs and *ruwadzano* groups [not] meeting remains unsolved.

I had not as yet required Women Advisers to report specifically on their accomplishments in relation to their progress plans. We discussed these during the refresher course. They still needed more training in programme planning and reporting within its framework. I felt that Women Advisers in non-operational districts were still simply responding to requests as they came up and spent too much time on the homecraft aspects (including shows) and leadership issues of women's clubs.

For the coming year I would require them to introduce at least one new focus to their work – preferably a literacy project or groups for girl school-leavers, depending which need had been most strongly expressed by the women and girls they served. Helping women to obtain the vote in council affairs and to get women councillors elected or appointed would have to become one of their progress plans, seeing that women everywhere had expressed this particular felt need and had had lessons on how councils worked in every district, barring the operational ones. Assisting committees running pre-school groups would be their fourth option. We had done enough ground work. I would want evidence throughout the year that they had taken steps every month towards the stated aims in their progress plans.

On the other hand, I was aware that the war was spreading to every district, which would curtail such new focus. And – damn it! – I was being transferred. Thus the stress on programme planning during this refresher course, planned long ahead, was going to be somewhat futile. I was not going to be replaced and field staff would not get the required support.

Apart from programme planning we focused on the establishment of Red Cross posts in PVs/CVs, the subsidized Freedom from Hunger feeding schemes for under-fives, the types of groups we could foster for girl school-leavers, including YFC, and the minimum standards for pre-schools to be aimed at. For the compulsory community development session we

had a very interesting talk and film on community development in India and on India's population problems. Novel ideas for craft work – I was thinking of the girl school-leavers – were also introduced. For example, we worked on recycling glass bottles and on making collages, on decorating articles with colourful seeds of indigenous trees and making imaginative necklaces with them. Wyn Wilson came to conduct interviews with each Women Adviser. Betty Mtero spent the two days during which these were conducted at her side.

As usual, Women Advisers were sewing their uniforms during their refresher course. However, those in the most sensitive areas were no longer wearing theirs, or only intermittently. Miss Wilson had enquired about this beforehand. I had responded:

Of the eight Women Advisers in Mudzi, Mtoko and Mrewa, five are stationed in PVs/CVs. They are wearing their uniforms intermittently – at courses, seminars, staff meetings, etc. Two of them are wearing them always while working in their PVs of residence, one of these also in the neighbouring villages. The Women Adviser who works in a population that is not yet resettled is not wearing hers. The three Women Advisers in Wedza are generally not wearing theirs.



At my insistence, Lionel Leach came to the Women Advisers' refresher course to tell them about my transfer himself. I could not bear to be in the same room and waited in an adjacent classroom until he had gone. There I fainted.

The Women Advisers were stunned. 'What did he say to you?' I asked when I returned to the classroom.

He said that you were seriously overworked, that you were not yourself lately because you are actually ill from overwork. He said that if you continued to work like this you would collapse. Surely you understand that she has to be transferred for her own good? Mashonaland West will be easier for her. Surely you don't want Mrs Chenaux-Repond to collapse?

I was equally stunned. I hated Lionel Leach for manipulating the Women Advisers' emotions – but what had I actually expected him to say?

Over the next few days individual Women Advisers approached me privately: 'Please will you tell us the truth? We don't quite believe what the Provincial Commissioner said.' I did not have the heart to tell them that I had become politically suspect, that I no longer had the support of the

PC, even of Miss Wilson. Telling them about office intrigues would have been worse than futile. I only told them that the transfer had come about against my wishes. The Women Advisers could not ask Miss Wilson to 'tell them the truth'. She had already done her interviews, in my presence, never mentioning my imminent transfer.

We had the simplest of farewells together. There were many muted thank-yous. Louisa Nhavira made a short speech on behalf of her colleagues. She ended by saying: 'Mrs Chenaux-Repond carried our problems, our pain, not like a sister, not like a mother, she carried them as if they were her own.'

They handed me a gift. Some of them must have gone to town by bus to buy it while Miss Wilson was interviewing without my noticing. It was a copper plaque inscribed:

Of your unspoken word you remain master.

Your spoken word masters you.

I was able to give them a gift of my own. They had long expressed a wish to have the opportunity one day to fly in an aeroplane. I was going to fulfil that wish if it killed me.

Thanks to my good relationship with the ADF pilots I managed to book a plane while the Women Advisers were still at their refresher course, never telling my seniors. They would get the bill later. I was past caring about a reprimand. We spent a morning at Mount Hampden aerodrome, where the Natural Resources Board aeroplane awaited us. It took eight to ten passengers, and the Women Advisers, Philippa Maphosa and I were flown over Salisbury and surrounds in relays in very generous loops – at least half an hour per group.

However, their first flight was not undiluted joy for all of them. When I met Women Adviser Margaret Chitumba again in 2013, she recounted the following memory:

We were so excited to go on that flight. But when the plane sped over the tarmac, lifted into the air and we were up high above the town we were terrified. Lucy Mukombiwa was with the first group that went up. When she came down the steps she said: 'Margie, don't go up, you have BP [high blood pressure], you are sure to die!' However, I did go up. I did not want to miss this chance.

You went up with every group and you kept saying, 'Look at the houses, look at the fields, *look!*' But when the plane dipped a wing to make a curve, we were sure it was going to fall out of the sky. The wings were so thin! And those flaps were surely going to break off. The flight was very bumpy, which made us even

more scared. I was still laughing with excitement, but most were embracing each other to comfort each other in their coming death. Your assistant, Miss Mundangepfupfu, was sitting next to the pilot. We saw that he was teaching her to fly. Now we were really convinced that the plane was going to crash!

But we came safely down. I remember asking you, 'Did you really come like this all the way from Switzerland?' But you explained that the big planes go up very high into the sky, where the air is still and where there are hardly any bumps.

For most Women Advisers that was their first and last flight. I was fortunate to be able to fly to Zambia some years later, and what you said was true. A flight in a big plane is not bumpy, you feel much safer, like travelling in a bus.

They sang me their farewell song on the tarmac after we had all come safely down and they had recovered from their excitement or fear – a song composed especially for me, about our working together.

Back on the course, while doing their needle work, the Women Advisers now also hummed the song I had heard women sing so often in the field:

*Se madzimai emuZimbabwe
Takamirira zvakana
Kurema kwemutoro*

Kunoda madzimai

Hazvinamoshva nyamgwe zvorema

Takamirira zvakana

As women of Zimbabwe
We wait patiently
The very heaviness of the
burden
Needs women to carry
them
It does not matter that
things are difficult
We are waiting patiently



I was not replaced. There was no officer available to replace me. A circular from the PC went out to DCs. It announced my transfer and told them that Women Advisers and Development Workers must no longer travel to the province, or visit the provincial office, that they were entirely a district responsibility from now on. So, officially, they were not even allowed to visit Philippa Maphosa, nor were they allowed to visit me in the Mashonaland West office 'just for memory's sake'. Travelling to Salisbury was very difficult for them anyway; buses into many areas had long stopped operating. Besides, they would have to do it at their own cost and take leave to do so.

There was no farewell between the Development Workers and me. They were informed by District that I had left Province.

Relationships had been cut with a razor blade. I was devastated.



Although I had been transferred, there were a few things to tidy up in Mashonaland East. On 2 December, the PC wrote to the DC Mrewa:

As you are aware Women Adviser Nyakabau has since her return from the Red Cross course she attended in 1976 regularly treated villagers for minor ailments. Up to now she has been supplied with medicines from the provincial office. Could she please in future be supplied through your office. A list of medicines immediately required is attached.

Mercifully I was allowed to deliver toys to the pre-school group established in Makosa PV on 23 December myself, with the DC's support. I had written to the DC Mtoko as follows:

All toys ... were made by Standard 4 children of Alfred Beit School, Mabelreign, after I gave a talk to them about 'Children in Protected Villages'. As you will see a great deal of love, care and hard work has been put into this project both by the children and their teachers.

Taking toys to Makosa PV was very important to me. Women in Makosa had not wanted to be involved in any activities. According to Development Workers Mildred Chidzungu and Queenie Chipaumire, they persisted in saying, 'we cannot do anything while we are in jail'.

Eventually some mothers accepted the idea of a playgroup, but the Development Workers had to run it. Former voluntary workers had not come forward for any activities and did not want to be identified, avoiding any enquiries. If the playgroup could be fostered, the Development Workers might be able to encourage other activities. You have to start by trying to fulfil a genuinely felt need, helping women to overcome their fear of getting together in groups.



Reflecting on my enforced transfer, I must acknowledge that all key players in the drama were under great stress induced by the civil war and by over-work: my PC, Lionel Leach; my superior in the Section, Wyn Wilson; and, not least, myself. I had irked Lionel Leach and Wyn Wilson by my apparent insubordination and wilfulness. I had become politically

suspect. I had never made it a secret that I did not support the Rhodesian Front's policies, that I would never have considered voting for them. As I witnessed the ravages of the war, my resentment against the politicians on both sides of the conflict grew. Genuine dialogue could have avoided war. It is no wonder that Bruce Moore-King was to write with bitterness some years later, quoting another who had said it before him, that 'wars are caused by fathers and fought by sons'.⁵

Peter Hancock, a senior in the BCD Training, had asked me why I didn't divest myself of my 'Internal Affairs mantle' in preparation for independence, which was sure to come. 'You would be able to do much good after independence if you were seen to take a stand against the regime now. By sacrificing yourself for your beloved field staff you are actually propping up the system.' 'Life is not easy when you don't know where you stand politically,' another had said to me, urging me to make a stand for 'white Rhodesia'.

Yet I knew where I stood – or, rather, I knew what was crushing me: my empathy with what the civilian people suffered. By this time the civil war had affected every family in the country, black and white, and I sympathized with them all. I empathized with what fighters on both sides suffered. The horror of the cruelty they inflicted, were capable of. The dehumanizing effect of war. The callousness of denouncers. The prospect of countless psychologically damaged individuals in the future – damaged, perhaps, beyond repair by what they had suffered, witnessed or perpetrated.

I also knew that transfers were part of the employment conditions of every civil servant, although no one in our Section had been transferred before. My attachment to the Women Advisers and Development Workers in the province had become 'too strong', both Lionel Leach and Wyn Wilson had said. No doubt Lionel Leach also had some genuine concern for my health, while I stubbornly declared myself to be 'just fine'.

Dorienne had to move out of the offices of the PC Mashonaland West and move in with the PC Mashonaland Central. Office space was scarce there. Moving our offices with all the *katundu* for PCs/CVs and HEDs' and pre-school courses was a nightmare, as was disentangling our files, since we had both covered a part of Mashonaland West in addition to our 'main province'. Luckily we had Kate Gondo and Philippa Maphosa to help, but Dorienne was about to lose her assistant, while Philippa was about to have no one to assist.

I did all this in a somnambulant manner.

⁵ Bruce Moore-King, *White Man, Black War* (Harare: Baobab Books, 1988), 65.

The String of Beads

In a Protected Village, Mudzi, end of 1977

The day had been tough. Now was the time to relax, before night fell and I had to go back to the Keep, to face another new Keep commander and try to get through to him what we were trying to do.

I was walking with the Development Worker along the periphery of the PV, the huts set back quite a long way from the fence. The ground was sandy, only a few tufts of grass here and there, most of them trampled and thirsted to death, dry broken stalks littering the soil. Would they awaken again with the rains?

The sun shone orange, had sunk into the strata of haze formed by suspended particles of dust and soot from veld fires, hugely magnified, her heat blunted, her rays flooding the huts in warm light. A faint breeze was stirring. We had been talking easily. Fatigue seeping from our bodies and minds, we now fell silent.

We watched an old woman shuffling towards us. She appeared in the distance, thin, casting a long shadow, staggering a few steps forward, pulling herself upright, then staggering a few steps, zigzagging her way. We halted and stood still, watching her progress.

She was now kicking up sand lustily. With every step, sand flew up and landed, dust dissipating slowly in the soft breeze. Puffs of dust hung in the air for a while, marking the path she had walked.

'What kind of a day did you have, my friends?' she asks heartily as she reaches us.

We told her how we had spent our day and she took a lively interest, responding with 'Is that so?' and 'Aah, you did a good job!' her eyes mocking us somewhat.

'You have been where the beer is?' the Development Worker asks good-naturedly.

'I have been where the beer is!' she answers agreeably. 'And I am drunk, so wonderfully drunk!'

And then: 'I hear that this *murungu* [white person] here sat with the women yesterday and tried to talk them into joining the school for adults. Some women said: "We do not have the money." The *murungu* said: "I know you have very little money. But when women say to me 'we have no money' they often mean 'we want to use the little money we have for something that is more important to us'. What is it that you would prefer to spend your money on?"

'The *murungu* pulled two Mazoe bottles of *kachasu* out of her basket and put them to the side of the books she had placed on the ground before. She said: "Some of you are going to buy *kachasu*. The books here cost 50 cents. The *kachasu* here costs 50 cents. It is up to you. You can choose the books and learn to read and write. It will be very hard work for a long time. Some will mock you and say, 'Are you a child now, going to school?' But in the end it will change your life. Or you can choose *kachasu*. It will make you forget your troubles for a while. But tomorrow your troubles will be back.'"

The woman paused, then said to both of us: 'What use, do you think, would being able to read and write be to an old woman like me? I have raised eight children

working in the fields with these hands here.’ She waved them in our faces – old hands, gnarled and dry and cracked from working the soil. ‘My children have always had enough to eat without me reading and writing. Fine young men and women the older ones have grown into. Now I have chosen beer.’

‘You are wearing nice beads on your ankles,’ I said. ‘I have never seen such beads before. May I look at them?’

Her right foot came up almost to my face instantly, her leg stretching straight out from her hip. The Development Worker caught her elbow to stop her falling over. We were all laughing now, she lowered her leg and I squatted down to examine the beads. They were of a grey, soft metal, formed by hand, about the size of dried sugar beans and strung on bark string. The woman, who was not as ancient as we had first thought when we saw her in the distance, told us their story.

‘When I was young, I was very weak. So weak that I used to fall over. Like this.’

She flung herself on to the ground backwards, lying in the dust with all four limbs stretched out stiffly. Startled, we dived after her, discovered she was not hurt, and scolded her mildly.

‘You must not do this, *ambuya*, you’ll hurt yourself!’ We helped her up, holding her by her arms and shoulders.

Upright again and unconcerned, she continued her story.

‘My mother said, “You will never find a good husband, weak as you are. You will never be a mother of many children,” and took me to a famous *n’anga*. He gave me these beads, saying that I must never take them off, lest my sickness return. When I was married and had borne two children, I took them off. But soon I was weak again. I used to fall over like this.’

She flung herself back into the sand again, with us diving after her, admonishing her, helping her to clamber up. Now covered in dust, she continued undeterred.

‘Twelve children I have borne my husband, four dead, eight alive. Now could I have done this if I had been weak, falling over like this?’

We both grabbed her, fearing another demonstration.

‘Twelve children I have borne him, working all my life in the fields for our food, fetching firewood, fetching water, sweeping the yard, cooking until my daughters were big enough to help. But now the big children “have gone”. So I thought to myself, “I am now tired. It is enough.” I said to my husband, “Look at this old body of mine. It is time you took a young wife!”

‘He did not want to at first. So I looked for a strong young wife for him myself, and in the end he married her. Now, when he says to me, “It is time to go to the fields,” I say: “You have a young wife.” When he says to me, “The yard is becoming a playground for lizards,” I say to him: “You have a young wife.” When he wants to come into my hut at night, I say to him: “What do you want with this old body? You have a young wife.”

‘I sleep well alone on my sleeping mat. When I wake up in the morning I just lie there, not even stirring in my blankets. I listen to the sounds the young wife makes – swish, swish, swish, as she sweeps the yard. When I get up I sit in the sun, like a man does. When the sun is there – she points to where the sun would be at about

nine o'clock – I go for beer. I stay there all day, talking with the men and the other old women who come for beer. When the sun goes down, I go home drunk, very drunk. When I arrive at home, I say to the young wife: "Where is my sadza?", just like a man.'

She looks at us in amused defiance. We smile back at her, all of us now engulfed by the last rays of the crimson sun. Then the old woman bids us farewell and we watch her go, weaving less now, disappearing among the huts.

As we strolled back to the village we laughed and agreed that, all things considered, she had arranged her life rather well and that, if we had had her hard life, were now old, and our children had gone to war, we might not want to go to school either.

I cannot remember ever having seen that woman again – until that day, that day after the catastrophe in my own life had been unleashed and I stood in the crowd feeling utterly alone, I alone knowing that this was my last day ever to be there. Suddenly she stood in front of me with a string of small beads of a light-grey metal, formed by hand and strung on a string of bark.

'Wear them on your heart,' she said, 'for it is your heart that is sick, not your body. Never take them off and your heart will grow strong again. It will stop hurting so much.'

Then she was gone, disappearing among the women who were walking back to their homes to cook the evening meal.



Some positive things had been happening in the war areas during 1977. The *African Times* reported two of them on 4 January 1978.

New facilities are being provided in a number of areas in the Mashonaland East Province to improve the living standards of the tribal people. Many of these places are in the sensitive areas.

A new clinic has been completed and opened in Gozi Keep, in the Chikwizo Tribal Trust Land, Mudzi District. Another is being built in Nhakiwa village, in the Uzumba Tribal Trust Land, Mrewa District.

The Gozi clinic was built and financed by the village committee, while Nhakiwa clinic is being built by the local Council. Two Red Cross trained nurses, Miss Kathlene Muchichachika and Miss Poulie Chisamu [Pauline Chisango] have been employed to run the Gozi clinic.

Previously the people in these areas travelled long distances to get treatment in the neighbouring protected villages.

There was a photograph of the two 'nurses' in front of a neat shelf of medicines, neat walls. In the Ndebele pages, '*Abacebisi babomama abangu*'

carried a picture of the Women Advisers' refresher course at Senka Training Centre, with one of our skills trainers and Adaire Robbins.

Under the guidance of the Adult Literacy Organisation of Rhodesia, an adult literacy class was recently started in Dendera Protected Village, Mudzi District.

The class is taught by Mrs Alice Tamangani, who was trained in Salisbury in 1973.

Before taking up her present position in the PV, she taught at Dendera Mission.

Lessons were given in the open air until a classroom was built. This classroom is cool, well ventilated and furnished with benches, a teacher's table and a blackboard.

At present there are about 25 adults and 16 teenagers attending the class. Each pupil pays a fee of 25¢ a year.



A refresher course for Development Workers in a classroom at Domboshawa National Training Centre, run by the BCDT



Epilogue: 1978–79





Eventually, in February 1978, it was announced that the Community Development Section (Women) had been upgraded, backdated to 1 October 1977. However, the 'upgrading' was a mockery of what we had asked for.

The post of Senior Community Development Officer (Women), Wyn Wilson's, was renamed Chief Community Development Officer (Women). The Provincial Community Development Officer posts were re-named Senior Community Development Officer (Women).

However, no new posts of Chief or Senior CD Officers (Women), with new and higher salary scales, had been created. The Public Services Board merely lengthened the former senior and provincial officer scales and renamed the posts! The opportunities for accelerated advancement – increments for passing Internal Affairs or other examinations while employed – that we had requested were not granted. Furthermore, all currently serving officers had to apply for 'promotion' to the renamed posts! It all was somewhat of an insult.

We duly applied for the 'new' posts. Miss Wilson was 'promoted' to (i.e. re-designated) Chief CDOW, and Dorienné Graham-Jolly, Alison Stewart and I were 'promoted' to (i.e. re-labelled) Senior CDOW. Since the previous PCDOs' and SCDOs' salary scales had merely been lengthened, the only two officers who immediately benefited financially were Wyn Wilson and Alison Stewart, who had been sitting on the top step of the old salary scales. Dorienné, Adaire and I received no financial benefits. However, seven new posts, titled Community Development Officers (Women), had been created. The former provincial officers whose applications for 'upgrading' to Senior CDOW were not honoured were to be moved into these posts.

I thought that the creation of junior posts at province was probably designed to forestall any further assistants being employed by Provincial Authorities and seconded to our Section, thus not being under Wyn Wilson's control. Indeed, she had applied for such posts the year before. We later found out that pressure was being put on the Provincial Authorities Mashonaland East and West to abolish the posts for Assistant Executive Officers Community Development (Women) and possibly absorb the incumbents into the Provincial Authority structure.

We asked whether the plan was that in future every province would

have an SCDO^W supervising a CDOW? Also, could new officers with sufficient qualifications and experience be appointed directly into the senior officer's post? This aspect was never clarified.

Our colleague Adaire Robbins was not regraded, though she stayed on the same salary as before as the two scales overlapped. She was now called 'Community Development Officer (Women)', without the prefix 'Provincial', yet she continued to carry the same responsibilities that she had fulfilled before.

At the staff meeting, Wyn Wilson said she that had never received an application for 'promotion' from Adaire. Adaire insisted that she had applied. Dorianne and I were not surprised that Adaire felt victimized and we were beginning to suspect that also; we began to see that there had been other indications before. We did not know what had happened between them, but suspected that Miss Wilson was being vindictive. I could not understand why the designation 'Provincial CDOW' was not kept for what remained a provincial post. Adaire felt this 'demotion in terminology' keenly.

Wyn Wilson reported at the officers' staff meeting of 5-6 April 1978 that the new CDOW posts had been advertised and that one European and eighteen African women had applied. She was pleased at the standard of the degrees of the African applicants. Two had been selected and would start work on 1 May 1978. They did not. We were not told why. One new officer, M.G. Stanton, was appointed sometime later in 1978, though not posted to a province.

In contrast, more women were appointed to the administrative section of the ministry. They were paid 'the rate for the job', that is the same as the men, and were promoted according to the same criteria. Indeed, Debbie Enslin was promoted to ADC in June 1978. Debbie's husband, Barry, also achieved the rank of ADC and they were transferred to Mrewa District together sometime later, by which time the district was under such severe pressure from the insurgents that the appointment of two ADCs was warranted.

The shabby treatment of the Section had its effect on officer staffing. The 'Provincial' (now 'Senior') posts in the Matabeland South,

Assistant DC is a woman

Herald Reporter

MRS Deborah Enslin has been appointed the first woman Assistant District Commissioner. Her appointment took effect on June 24, and she has been posted to Marandellas.

Mrs Enslin joined Internal Affairs as a cadet District Officer in January 1976, and was posted to Marandellas as a District Officer.

The District Commissioner of Marandellas, Mr John Saunders, said of her appointment: "I was very pleased about it. She does an excellent job of work and I am quite happy to have her."

He said Mrs Enslin would carry out basically the same duties as her male counterparts.

Mashonaland East and Victoria provinces remained vacant, as did the Midlands and Matabeleland North CD officers' posts after Adaire Robbins and Alison Watson left in mid-1978. Thus five of the eight provinces were not covered: Matabeleland North and South, Midlands, Victoria and Mashonaland East. The newly created CDOW posts also remained unoccupied. Dorienné and I, respectively, covered Mashonaland Central and West, and Alison Stewart, Manicaland, although she hardly travelled out any more.

Regardless of the staffing position at provincial level, field staff continued to be appointed. The African Development Fund, from which the wages and sensitive-area allowance for Development Workers had been paid, was running out of funds. Wyn Wilson had decided to use the government allocations for new Women Advisers' posts and to transfer fourteen Development Workers into these government posts, and a three-month course was instituted to upgrade their training. In Mashonaland East, Patricia Rwizi and Annah Mugumisi were offered this chance, which they accepted. After retraining, the Development Workers were called Women Advisers (Development) and were still liable to transfer to any province in the country. Their wages, however, were somewhat improved and they were required to join the pension scheme.

Wyn Wilson reported at the April staff meeting that twenty-seven newly trained Women Advisers had commenced work and that she had applied for thirty-six new posts in the 1978/79 financial year. Most of these last posts would, however, be taken up by Development Workers retrained as Women Advisers (Development). Nine new Development Workers would be appointed in May.

She also had plans for upgrading the training of experienced Women Advisers, which would also give those working in sensitive areas some respite. All would be given the chance of training for the National Certificate in Training and Extension (NCTE) offered by the BCDT at Alvord Training Centre near Fort Victoria.¹ The course was presented in four residential modules, those students passing the end-of-module examination proceeding to the next. This course proved to be too difficult for many of them; it was really aimed at people with O levels. Only a few were awarded the full certificate for this and other reasons. For example, for those in sensitive districts, it was simply not possible to do the practical assignments between the residential sessions.

¹ The NCTE course included: Identifying Training Needs, Training Design, Training Methodology, Human Relations, Motivation, Principles of Management, Research Methods, a Research Practical, a Training Practical, Statistics, Literacy Training.



In the meantime there had been further political developments. On 3 March 1978, Prime Minister Ian Smith, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, Revd Ndabaningi Sithole and Chief Chirau signed an 'Internal Settlement', according to which power would be transferred to the black majority by the end of the year. The four leaders formed an Executive Council in April 1978. Blacks were appointed to each Cabinet ministry, to serve as co-ministers with the whites already in these posts. Guerrilla leaders Robert Mugabe (ZANU) and Joshua Nkomo (ZAPU) immediately denounced these measures, as did many African states. The war intensified even further.

As a result of the Internal Settlement, a further military unit, officially called Security Force Auxiliaries but known by their nickname as *Pfumo reVanh*u (Spear of the People), was formed, and men were being trained in the vicinity of Domboshawa Training Centre. The unit, also dubbed Muzorewa's Forces, was placed under the command of the Special Forces Brigade, funded from the Prime Minister's office and administered by the BSA Police.

On 31 August 1978, the new government issued orders for the phased opening of selected PVs. Malcolm Pratt, DC Mudzi, issued a leaflet, roneo'd on the nasty paper we used at the time. It fell to Vedette Nick Baalbergen to oversee the implementation of the directive in Mudzi District. He recounted in 2013:

I arrived in Mudzi at the beginning of September 1978 and left in February 1979, after acting as District Commissioner for the months at the end of 1978. When I arrived, Malcolm Pratt, the District Commissioner, was holding meetings with the people, using the attached notice as a guideline. I moved right into the



**Vedettes John Strickland and Steve Levine and DSAs
dismantle Masarakufa PV, Mudzi, 2 September 1978**

dismantling exercise on arrival. There was quite a song and dance made of this from our side, which served to focus attention on our movements, while carrying out the removal of the wire. The dismantling of the PVs, though welcomed by many inmates, led to an upsurge in deaths.

MESSAGE TO TRIBESMEN FROM THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

As you are aware the District Commissioner has been asking you and your Chiefs how we can help you to live in your Protected Villages.

All of you said that you did not like the Villages and wished to live outside in your old kraal lines.

I have sent your message to the Government and the Government has agreed to let you move back to your old Kraal lines except to those areas which are NO-GO areas because of the war.

During the last two months many terrorists have joined the Government and others have been waiting to see if the Government will lead the people to majority rule so that there will be a Black Government on the 1st January, 1978.

In view of the decrease in terrorist activity the Government has, therefore, agreed that you may return to your homes as you have asked.

Some of you may wish to stay here without the wire. This is up to you. But the most important thing I have to tell you is that those of you who wish to move out must return to your old kraal lines except in the NO-GO area along the Mozambique border, where it is dangerous to live because of soldiers and mines in that area.

It is not proposed to move the D/As or Guard Force from the P.Vs. immediately, but some will be abandoned after a short time and others will continue to be occupied as sub-offices.

I must also remind you of the curfew which says that no one must move between sunset and sunrise more than 50 paces from his dwelling hut.

The terrorists have been fighting for a Black Government and the Government has agreed that all the people of Rhodesia will choose their own Black Government at the end of this year. There is no need for the war and to show you that Government intends to let you choose your own leaders the Government agrees that you need no longer live in Protected Villages.

When the war is completely over, the NO-GO area will disappear and the curfew which stops you moving at night will be lifted.

You will still require your Schools and Clinics and Businesses and you can arrange with the District Commissioner through your Chiefs where Schools, Clinics and Businesses will be run.

- Remember -
- a) You may stay here without the wire for as long as you wish.
 - b) If you move, you must go to your old kraal line
 - c) The curfew
 - d) The NO-GO
 - e) The Chief to see the District Commissioner re Clinic, Stores and Schools.

M.A. PRATT
DISTRICT COMMISSIONER



I left the Section in October 1978. I looked for an alternative job first. I enquired with the Directorate of the Branch of Community Development Training whether they had a suitable job for me. When I had made my decision to resign from the Community Development (Women) Section and to join the Branch as Training Officer, I fled to family and friends in Switzerland to come to terms with my decision. I felt a traitor.

Kate Gondo, my Administrative Assistant in Mashonaland West, left work mid-year 1978 in somewhat unusual circumstances. I had not worried much when she didn't arrive in the office one morning, assuming that some minor ailment was preventing her. It was, however, unusual for her not to send a message, for she was very conscientious. By the third day I tried to contact her at home but was not successful. No one answered the phone at her home, even in the evening. I became really concerned when she did not come to work for a fourth day.

After about a week, she phoned from Britain. She explained that she had long harboured a burning desire to further her education. She had not told anyone that she had secretly applied for a bursary to study at Edinburgh University in Scotland. When she had been granted the bursary she bought herself an air ticket and left the country without even telling her three children and her husband. 'If I had told him he would have prevented me from going,' she explained. He later divorced her on the grounds of desertion and retained custody of their children.

Kate Gondo completed her Masters Degree in Community Education with emphasis on Adult Education, returned to Zimbabwe in 1982 and joined the new Ministry of Education and Culture. Her unit introduced an adult literacy programme in co-operation with the Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs. Eventually she left government service and became Principal of Ranche House College.



Philippa Maphosa left towards the end of 1978. In her own words, she left both on health and political grounds:

We were trying to start a family and I had serious health challenges. I also felt that my job was getting more political than I was comfortable with. There were indications that our positions were going to be modified so that we could engage with the new political entities, the transitional government and the returning guerrillas. We were supposed to 'campaign' for the survival of

the Provincial Authorities concept to the new government under discussion. Our work schedules were going to change so that we could work 'flexi' hours in order to accommodate this new initiative. This was not going to afford me the recommended rest I needed. I was also not convinced enough of the Provincial Authority concept to be able to defend it.

When I heard that Philippa was leaving I went to visit her in her Mashonaland East office. I had sworn I would never enter that building again, but for her sake I did. As I was about to enter, the security officer left through the door with a big trolley piled with my former files. They were going for shredding. Philippa shot me a quick knowing look from behind her desk. I was later told that the Internal Affairs security officers had a brief to go through ministry files and remove anything that might be incriminating. Apparently he had said, 'I'm not reading through all that women's stuff,' and took everything away.

However, Philippa, when she had heard he was coming, had acted quickly, removing some files and papers and placing them into black 'village trunks', covering them with wool, material and knitting needles. I took them home. And that is how enough records have survived to enable me to write this story of the Women's Section in Mashonaland South today.



I had been effectively cut off from my Mashonaland East field staff, as Penny Ross had been cut off from Development Workers before me. Penny recounted:

When I had left the Section and asked for permission to go and visit the DWs, Wyn Wilson refused to let me. So I went to see John Connolly and he gave me a letter of authority including a request to the DCs, Intaf staff, etc., to assist me in every way possible to achieve such visits, which he considered would be beneficial to the DWs and the communities.

I like to think that the intelligence such as he received from the field was rather more to my credit than Wyn cared to allow. Needless to say, she was furious. In fact, when the DWs came in for a refresher course at the Roger Howman Hall, I visited them there and planned to meet them in town when they were free. Betty ordered them not to meet me, but they ignored her. So she was furious, too.

I was also to be shown that I had no right to further contact with

Development Workers after I left the Section. When I was in Masvingo on an assignment for the BCDT, I decided spontaneously to take an afternoon off to visit the Workers who were on a course at Roger Howman Hall. After all, I had been denied the chance to say goodbye to them. Betty Mtero was not there. The course participants were busy with embroidery. They were jubilant when I entered, we had joyful talks together and they composed a song for me, the words of which they wrote on the chalkboard. They happily told Betty about my visit when she returned, long after I had left.

I was told about two years later when I met a Development Worker quite by chance that Betty Mtero had been furious that they had 'entertained me' and that she had rubbed the song off the board. 'We could not understand what we had done wrong.' She added that even Miss Wilson, at the end of the course, told the Development Workers that, since I had left the Section, I had no right to visit them. What had got into Wyn Wilson and Betty Mtero? What had got into Lionel Leach, for that matter?



Norah Chitekwe wrote me letter on 9 November, partly conveying joyful news, partly hinting at very painful experiences. This letter was to be her last.

I am very busy this year. I have been to eSikhoveni for the NCTE. You may have heard that we were 41 Women Advisers from all over. We were then 14 in Part 3 and afterwards we remained 3 in Part 4. I was the only one in Mashonaland East.

The course is really tough but following some of the things you taught us at Refresher Courses I managed to reach Part 4. Statistics was new and rather hard for me.

People are now out of the PVs, but the death rate has doubled. We are just living the world of unknown. Things are really bad. So many innocent souls have gone because of the youth we call *mujibas* here ...

A few Mashonaland East field staff of the Women's Section left the ministry during 1978 and 1979, among whom were Women Adviser Lucy Mukombiwa, and Development Workers Elizabeth Makuzva and Patricia Rwizi. Others - Development Worker Philippa Mukonyora, Women Adviser Goto's family and Women Adviser Norah Chitekwe - tragically became victims of war.



Mrs Lucy Mukombiwa left in mid-1979. She had covered Chinamora TTL in Goromonzi District, working from her late father's home on the Domboshawa road, only some 30km from Salisbury city centre. In 2013, she told me this:

The comrades had started coming into the area in about 1975, at first only slowly. DC Mr Major talked to us fieldworkers and told us to be careful, as we would be likely targets for the terrorists. He advised us not to discuss politics with anyone. If we were approached with political talk, we should just listen, but not to engage in any discussion. He said: 'This government is not wanted anymore. You, as government workers are also not wanted by the comrades. Should the comrades ask you for money, just give it, to remain safe.'

Later, many government workers left their jobs as the war slowly came into Chinamora. They were particularly worried about the army base near Makumbi.

At the beginning of 1976 my work was not yet much affected, though. Both men and women came to the Local Government Awareness training and the pre-schools continued to flourish, guided by mothers' committees, especially after we persuaded the Council to take over the collection of school fees and payment of teachers.

Mrs Mukombiwa then left Chinamora for more than a year, first to go on 'maternity leave' and afterwards to await her divorce from her husband, who had not only become abusive but had been dismissed by two employers in succession when money went missing. She lived with her parents and children in Highfield during this time. During the last part of her enforced long leave, she also came to help Philippa and me in our office on a voluntary basis.

In 2013 she recounted what had happened in her work area after she was re-employed in August, 1977:

The comrades started to hold *pungwes*. I myself never went to any. Government workers were not wanted there and, frankly, I had never been interested in politics. I was interested in my work and in church matters. I knew that, whatever the future of our country, I would always want to do some form of community development work.

I am not interested in politics today either. Politicians are not concerned about the welfare of ordinary people. If you vote in a new leader he will soon make the same mistakes as the one you voted out. I would rather make a difference within a small

circle in which I can help women to change their lives for the better. That is why I am still doing voluntary work at my age, for instance for the Widows' Association.

There were Selous Scouts stationed in Chinamora. They lived in one of the houses from which the owner had run away, using his pots and plates. I was once forced to attend one of their meetings, together with others. They told us that the Selous Scouts were our friends, that they were here to protect us, that we should report terrorists to them. We just listened and then went away.

There was also an army camp near Makumbi Mission. The new DC wanted me to go and help there, with cooking and so on. He really did not understand a Women Adviser's proper work. I went once, although I was warned by others not to do this 'or I might die'.

Almost immediately after I had gone there I was warned by the headman's son that the comrades were looking for 'government workers who are working with the *varungu*' and that, in fact, they were looking for a Mrs Mukombiwa by name'. So I started sleeping at Domboshawa Training Centre, staying with Mrs Edith Mutakwa, my aunt, the wife of the training officer in charge of training health assistants. You had already left Mashonaland East by then.

Later I sometimes stayed in town at night, at my mother's house, and went to work by bus from there. Of course I had to pay for the bus fare with my own money. My work area was now becoming very sensitive and so I slept in town more and more. DC Lombard fired me for this in early 1979.

Miss Wilson did not support me. She said she could not do anything since the DC had sent a letter of dismissal to head office. So I just left. To be honest, I didn't even mind.



Development Worker Elizabeth Makuzva told me this in 2013:

I left the job of Development Worker in July 1979. In 1978 and 1979, when the war in Mtoko and Mudzi was at its height, Development Workers and Women Advisers were withdrawn from these districts. We attended various training courses with the Branch of Community Development Training at Alvord Training Centre in Victoria Province and with Betty Mtero at Roger Howman Hall in Fort Victoria.

I had a ‘misunderstanding’ with Betty Mtero at the time. I had gone for the weekend to visit relatives in Gutu and could not get transport to be back at Roger Howman Hall in time. Mrs Mtero did not accept this explanation. As a result of our misunderstanding I left. I did not even formally resign.



Development Worker Patricia Rwizi (Patricia Ngwerume after her marriage) recounted this to me on 12 July 2013:

I left the Women’s Section in 1979 after a series of gruelling incidents. The first was the death of my colleague Philippa Mukonyora in Mudzi, the second my near drowning in the Mushumbi river near Mushumbi Pools, the third was the death of a young national serviceman with whom I was travelling along the Mahuhwe road, back to my station.

On the day of Philippa’s death on 16 September 1978 we Development Workers had assembled at Mudzi district station. The monthly staff meeting had been scheduled for 2p.m. As we had ample time, Synodia Nyamana, my fellow worker from Nyamande Village, and I decided to take advantage of a truck going to Masarakufa township and boarded it to buy our groceries there. The meeting time was brought forward while we were at Masarakufa.

On our return just before 2 o’clock we entered the office. I held out my monthly report to the young national serviceman at the DC’s office who had been put in charge of the meeting. He tore it out of my hand, slapped me in the face with it and screamed at me: ‘The meeting ended long ago. I don’t want you in my district any more. You are just stubborn. I have already phoned Mrs Mtero [in Fort Victoria]. You are not to return to Nyamande. You are to leave for Fort Victoria immediately!’ He yelled at Synodia in the same manner when she came in.

We were shocked. He was not even the DC or the ADC. How could he fire us? We went to phone Mrs Mtero. She asked us: ‘What has happened to you? Why are you suddenly stubborn?’ We told her that we had done absolutely nothing wrong. We had come to the meeting late because the time had been changed without us knowing. Mrs Mtero replied that we had to report to her office anyway, as the DC did not want us anymore; she would listen to our story then.

Our bags were already packed and with us. During those days of war we never left anything in the CV when we went away for a day or two to the district station. Mrs Mtero allowed us an extra day to collect our pay and some money owed to us for knitting balaclavas and gloves for soldiers. Our colleagues were very concerned for us, as they thought we would be fired. I remember getting very worried myself, because my background was different from Synodia's, but she reassured me by saying angrily: 'Don't worry, if it means losing our jobs we can even go and work as domestic workers.'

The young man was still in a foul mood when a convoy was leaving for Masarakufa, Shinga and Msau/Kondo. Marjorie Munuwa, who worked in Msau/Kondo with Philippa Mukonyora, was not wearing her uniform. He bellowed at Marjorie to get off the vehicle, he was not going to carry her if she was not in her uniform. She pleaded with him, asking: 'How then will I get back to the PV?' He said he did not care. He also ordered someone else out of the Kudu for not wearing her uniform.

When we arrived at Roger Howman Hall in Fort Victoria Mrs Mtero told us of Philippa Mukonyora's terrible death. The vehicle she had been travelling in, in the convoy, had hit a landmine. The fuel tanks exploded and, together with six others, she was burnt to ashes inside the vehicle that would have also carried us had we not been sent away. Nobody could get near the vehicle to help them.

Ever since then, when somebody insults me, or attacks me without good reason, I think back to the day where the young man's unreasonable rudeness saved my life, saved me from an agonizing death. Then I think to myself: 'If a door closes for you, another one opens for you.' Or: 'It could be a blessing in disguise.'

As we had always had good work records, I was not fired but was transferred to Mashumbi Pools in Dande TTL. Synodia was transferred to another province and I never met her again. I hear that she has since passed away.

I arrived at Mushumbi Pools, where I was to replace Helen Betera. On my first day [and her last] she wanted me to meet a disabled woman on the other side of the Mashumbi [Manyame] river. The river was in full flood. We had to make a long detour via the bridge leading to the main road to reach her home. For our return journey we decided to be ferried across the river in a

mwadiya [a dug-out canoe]. The villagers gave us a very young boy, still inexperienced in the job.

As we reached the other shore, Helen, who had done this before, stepped out into the shallow water. I was totally inexperienced and just followed what she did. However, the dug-out had drifted and I stepped into water so deep that I could not even stand. I could not swim, have never learned to swim to this day. I screamed and grabbed the canoe. The young boy lost control and we were swept down river. Helen jumped into the water to try and rescue us. By now villagers had heard and seen us and yelled instructions as to what to do. I was terrified. We all knew that there were crocodiles in the river. I could only kick the water. Eventually we made it to the shore. We grabbed small bushes and pulled ourselves out.

The third incident happened while I was still at Mushumbi Pools. I had been to Sipolilo [now Guruve]. A number of us travelled back in a convoy. I was travelling on the back of a small pick-up truck, together with a young national serviceman and several DSAs. The pick-up kept breaking down. Each time the whole convoy stopped until it was repaired.

The national serviceman and I talked amiably together. He asked me about my work, we told each other about our lives. He asked me whether I enjoyed my work. 'How can I enjoy my work', I said, 'with all this violence around me? The soldiers kill, the guerrillas kill, villagers are being beaten; even in detention barracks, DAs and soldiers are cruelly treated.' He told me that he was a university student and hated this war. 'It's not *my* war,' he said. 'I am forced to take part in it as we young white men are all being called up. All I want is to go back to university.'

The convoy resumed its journey. As we neared the top of a rise we were ambushed. The DSAs and the young soldier jumped off the truck to defend the convoy. I pulled all their bags over me to try and protect myself. When the ambush was over, the national serviceman lay dead on the road. A piece of shrapnel had taken off part of his head. His brains were melting on the hot tarmac.

They put his body into a black plastic bag. I was sick with anger and pain. I was a mother myself. I thought of his mother, his parents, their pain of losing their son.

I had had enough of this senseless war. When I arrived at my quarters I packed my bags. I went to the road and returned

to Sipolilo by the same convoy that had brought us up and I left my job. At Sipolilo I was given accommodation by a Mr Mudeke [a schools inspector] and his wife, whom I knew from Mondoro.

To be honest, I never told the DC, Miss Wilson or Betty Mtero that I had abandoned my job. While looking for employment I handed in fake monthly reports at the end of the month and still collected my salary. The set-up in Sipolilo District was entirely different from what I was used to in Mudzi. We did not have any field staff meetings and I had not met any fellow government workers. I did not even know whether or not I had a provincial officer.

Then I saw an advertisement for two jobs for Community Workers in the mining township of Mvuma. I applied. I went for the interview and was selected from dozens of applicants, together with a local man. When I had secured my job with the Mvuma Community Board, I handed in my resignation and left immediately. Neither Miss Wilson nor Betty Mtero ever commented.



The years 1978 and 1979 were marred by the deaths of Development Worker Philippa Mukonyora, Women Adviser Norah Chitekwe, the ill-treatment of Women Adviser Colleen Goto and the killing of her husband. Unfortunately, I never met any of Philippa Mukonyora's family and know only the bare facts of her death. However, in 2013 I had the great joy of meeting Norah Chitekwe's daughters, Netsai Ndemera and Beth Chitekwe-Biti, and Colleen Goto's daughter Lillian Murwisi (all of whom I had seen last when they were children) and Lillian's husband, William Murwisi.²



As reported by Patricia Rwizi above, Philippa Mukonyora met a horrific death on 16 September 1978. Nick Baalbergen, then stationed at the Mudzi district station, sent me the newspaper clipping about the incident, published the next day in *The Herald*, after he had read an article that I had sent to an Internet website. He recalled in 2013:

² The daughters, highly educated professional women today, have allowed me to share some of their memories of their mothers, the influence their mothers have had on their lives, and the effect their mother's or father's murder had on their families.

I was in the convoy in which the vehicle carrying Philippa and five others died, following a landmine explosion and simultaneous explosion of the vehicle fuel tanks. We were dismantling a PV and were returning with a truckload of fencing material, with the laden truck, the slowest vehicle, in the lead.

I was driving an open-sided Land-Rover and also passed over the landmine. The vehicle following, carrying Philippa and others, was the only fully mine-proofed vehicle, a Kudu. The Kudu vehicle had a number of well-documented design shortcomings, one of which was sadly revealed by this incident.

The vehicle was flipped by the initial landmine explosion which it would normally have survived, with the passenger capsule intact. However the 'roll bars', which should have returned the vehicle to its side, collapsed, holding the vehicle in an 'upside down' position. The fuel tanks on either side of the capsule, burst and exploded.

All of this happened within seconds of the initial landmine blast. The passengers inside the capsule burnt to death. It was a horrendous incident, the mental images of which one never forgets. One gradually learns to live with the memories, but they are never far away.

We had in fact been dismantling the PVs for several weeks prior to this horrific landmine incident. The fencing wire was removed from the outer security fence, recovered and moved back to Mudzi. Two weeks before, the same crew dismantled the fencing around Masarakufa PV. I questioned the value of this exercise at the time and sadly the cost was seven lives. Our movements weren't exactly a secret – never a good thing in a volatile area such as Mudzi at the time. There was only one road into Shinga PV, so we could not vary our route in and out. We would be busy for several hours – plenty of time to mine the road on which we would be returning.

7-KS FROM MAIN ROAD
Landmine
TO SHINGA P.V. D4.
MUDZI
explosion
2.15 PM 16-9-78
kills six
KUDU GOK 10.7.
Herald Reporter
PRIVATE Henry Jones (23) from Gwelo, has died in action and six members of the Ministry of Internal Affairs died in a terrorist landmine explosion, Combined Operations Headquarters said in a communique yesterday.
The statement says the six were Cadet James Kendall Robertshaw, aged 20 and single from Salisbury, a former pupil of Ellis Robins School; District Security Assistant Herbert Chikanyabidze; District Security Assistant Jona Shadreck Roboho, aged 23 and single; District Security Assistant Mupeti, aged 23 and single; District Security Assistant Ebson Takanzawa, 24 and married with two children; and development worker Mrs Philippa Mukonyora, a widow with six children.

Report in the *Herald*,
17 September 1978,
with annotations by
Nick Baalbergen





The last photograph of the Goto family, December 1977

Cleopas Makanza Goto, husband of Women Adviser Colleen Goto (Wedza), was murdered in May 1978. Their daughter Lillian Murwisi told me this in 2013:

The final and worst incident of the war came in May 1978, when my father was taken away by the *vakomana* to a hidden camp. My baby sister Judith was about eight months old; I was 13, Lloyd 11 and Langton six. Someone had reported our parents to the *vakomana*. They accused them of being the security forces' informers and that they may have brought the security forces to the village!

My mother was a government worker, my father a councillor. In the eyes of the *vakomana* such people were sell-outs or government spies. Someone must have mentioned that my father had 'stayed with' the security forces for two weeks and must have been recruited as a spy for them. I am not exactly sure.³

The *vakomana* usually used village youths, *mujibas*, to do the run-around and, on that fateful night, a group of them was sent to our house to fetch both my parents. When both came out of the house to go – my Mum said – my baby sister started crying back in the bedroom. Apparently, they asked how old she was and Mum said that my father answered quickly and said that she

³ Colleen Goto's nephew believes that some people were jealous of the Gotos' success as farmers and reported that they were 'rich' because they received things from the whites they worked for.

was one month old. That is how she was spared that day. The *mujibas* said she should stay behind and nurse her.

My mother said that before the *mujibas* left, they warned her that she must not leave the village without letting the headman know and, worse, that they would come back for all of us.

Weeks went by. We lived in fear. We were anxious about our father's fate, but almost sure that he was gone. I joined my mother and baby sister in her bedroom and we shared it till the day we left the village. The boys also shared a bedroom.

We stayed on for about six weeks but were now living like aliens in that village. No one wanted to be seen visiting us or talking to us. My brothers and I continued going to school, but we walked the five kilometres or so alone. I guess everyone was scared to be seen being sympathetic.

When Mum was certain that our father was dead she took us four children and moved to town, taking only a suitcase of clothing. Our family was not allowed to bury our father.

The *vakomana* had placed our father's body in a shallow grave. We exhumed and reburied his remains after independence. An old woman showed us where he lay. But no one has stayed in our former homestead to this day.

In 2014 Lillian Murwisi told me of a fate similar to that of her father's that befell the husband of her mother's friend, Literacy Teacher Gertude Ndhlovu.

The Ndhlovu family was based at St Paul's School, Sango, just across the river from our village, towards the west. Mr Ndhlovu was the head teacher at that school. He was also killed in the same way as my father, after being denounced, about eight months after we had left. Getty and her five children left for Marondera, in the same manner we had, leaving everything behind.



Widowed Norah Chitekwe's life ended tragically on 19 February 1979. Members of her late husband's extended family branded her a sell-out to the guerrillas. Mrs Chitekwe was last seen – from a distance – being mercilessly beaten by a group of *mujibas*. Nobody came to help her. Her body was found days later floating in the poisonous waters of a dip-tank. Her blood relatives were not allowed to retrieve her body for burial.

When her daughters visited me, Beth told me this:

Our mother knew for some time that the guerrillas were

looking for her. When summoned by a *mujiba* and a *chimbwido*, our cousins from my father's side, she went to meet the guerrillas with fortitude. Perhaps, being the woman she was, she thought she could make them see reason. Yet she must also have realized that she might not return. Before she went to meet them she placed Jim Reeves's song, 'God Be with You till We Meet Again', on our gramophone and left it playing for us.

Only my twin cousins, Clara and Christopher, myself and our maid Zvamaziva were at home at the time. We children were eleven years old. My older siblings, Netsai, William, Gladys and Gertrude, and my other cousin, Sidney (two years older than me), were away.

We younger children were at first not told that our mother had been killed. She just did not come home. I remember walking towards the area where she was killed because I was going to find her. I was picked up by a teacher who brought me back home.

Eventually we had to be told. None of my Dad's relatives except my paternal aunt, Chona, and her daughters came to commiserate with us. Neighbours just acted like nothing had happened. My Mum's sisters told us not to cry lest we became targets, too. Not being able to grieve openly for the death of your mother is a most terrible thing for a child.

Only in March 1980 were Norah Chitekwe's blood relatives and children allowed to retrieve her body for proper burial – ironically on the day the election results ushering in 'a new Zimbabwe' were announced. They found that her body had been placed in a shallow grave only a few kilometres from the home she had so lovingly built with her husband. Beth recounted:

My maternal uncle, the current Chief Nyamukoho (Samson Mapereke Katsande), negotiated with the ZANU(PF) leadership in the area. We needed their permission to retrieve her body. Our paternal uncle, Katayamaoko Gideon, helped lead people to the shallow grave. I don't know how he knew the exact spot where she was buried. I suppose people knew. My eldest sister, Netsai, aged 25, had to help identify the body. Aged thirteen, I was still considered to be too young to see it.

Even though Norah had always wanted to be buried next to her beloved husband at Chitekwe kraal, her own brothers, deeply upset at the circumstances of her death and the complicity of her husband's family in this, arranged her burial at Katsande Village in Katsekunya, Mtoko – at their own *musha*.

The End

Though no stories really ever end.

An end came to Rhodesia, but the work of many of the Women Advisers and Development Workers continued, albeit in different forms, after Zimbabwe's independence.

I have written in greater detail about the lives of eight of the women who appear in this book, about their families and what happened to them later. Their stories appear in my *Women of Courage: Eight Life Stories*, which is available in a print edition (Harare: Earth Books, 2015) and in mobi and epub formats (Harare: Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2016).

Maia Chenaux-Repond



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Drawing on communications ‘rescued’ from the shredders in the last days of Rhodesia, enlivened by photographs and memories – both her own and those of her colleagues – Maia Chenaux-Repond tells the story of her work as the Provincial Community Development Officer (Women) for Mashonaland South in the Ministry of Internal Affairs in the 1970s.

There are no records whatsoever in the National Archives of Zimbabwe about the Community Development Section (Women), even though it was active in all the provinces. In the absence of other documentary sources, and all other provincial officers long having emigrated or died, this account of her work fills a significant gap in the pre-independence history of Zimbabwe.

The crucial focus of the Women’s Section on improving the lives and skills of women in the rural areas became progressively more difficult when the civil war intensified from the early 1970 as rural people – and the development workers themselves – were moved into ‘Protected Villages’, and as the Ministry became increasingly militarized.

‘The narrative relating to the years of more intense warfare shows courageous women continuing in their development work through troubles and dangers, suffering the same upheavals that the people around them were facing, and remaining committed to their work. There are lessons and inspiration for all in these pages.’

Michael Bourdillon, Professor Emeritus, Department of Sociology, University of Zimbabwe.

